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Sarah (Stickney) Ellis 1812-1877

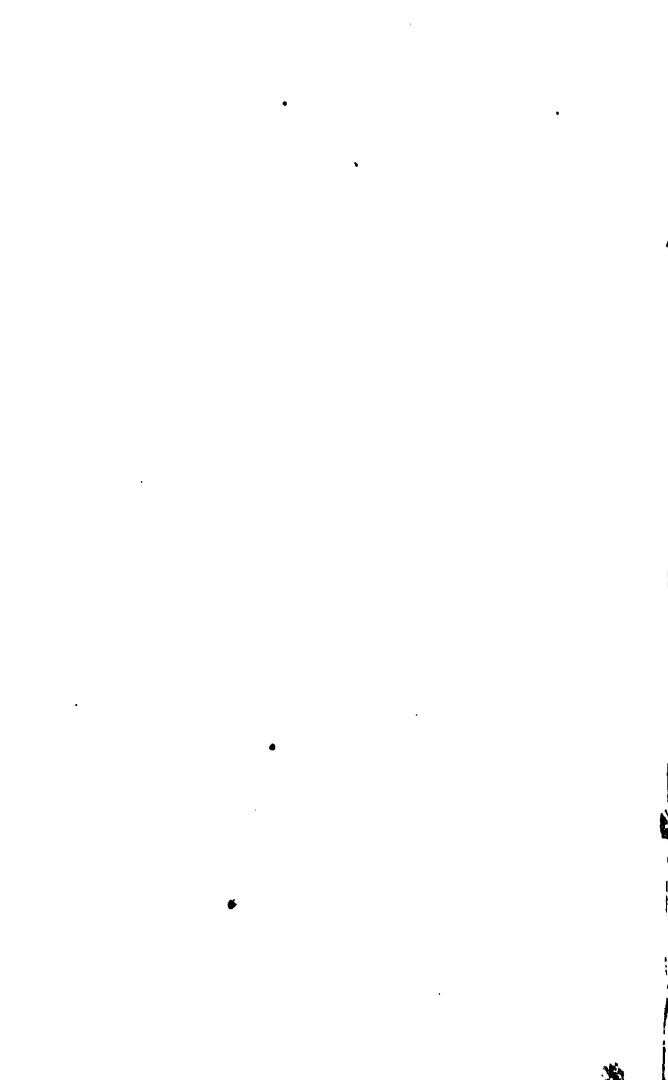
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**TALES**  
**FOR**  
**THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CHILDREN.**

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**SOMERVILLE HALL,**

**AND**  
**THE RISING TIDE.**

**BY MRS. ELLIS.**

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defiance ; so that before I was aware of it, I had assumed the air and tone of one who acts on the defensive. With others she conversed rapidly and fluently ; but whenever her opinions and mine came in contact, they were decidedly opposed ; and before the evening closed, we were positively rude to each other. On my part, I was piqued that one so young, and a woman, should presume to take the lead in conversation ; while she was equally surprised and annoyed, to find a gentleman, and a stranger, insensible to her attractions, and unmoved by her influence.

Once, and once only, I detected myself gazing at her with admiration. She had been talking with an old gentleman, of narrow prejudices, and rigid ways of thinking and judging of the poor ; when, forgetting all argument, all reasoning, and all calculation—three things she was rather apt to forget—she burst forth into such an indignant and eloquent appeal to the feelings and sympathies of human nature, that the company became silent, and every eye was fixed upon her. Upon which she appeared suddenly to recollect herself, and, shocked at the prominent part she was taking, as well

as at the degree of personal feeling she was exhibiting, a burning crimson rushed into her face, while she bent down her head, silent and evidently abashed.

"There is some grace in her yet," thought I, "for she knows how to blush; and from that moment I regarded her with more complacency; while my sister relieved her embarrassment, by immediately proposing music.

Again I was annoyed beyond measure, for I doubted not this country belle would inflict upon us some old piece of music, with its endless variations and accompaniments, the practice of a whole year of her boarding-school education. I was mistaken in my calculations, however; for Miss Somerville refused to be the first to play; and my sister had to make many journeys round the room, pleading with different ladies before any could be led blushing to the instrument.

As usual, when they did come, they came in shoals; and the gentlemen then amused themselves with politics, more to their hearts' content. There were still some of the party not so easily satisfied; and I heard my sister whisper to her friend, "My dear

Kate, have pity upon my piano, and put a stop to this discord."

Kate laughed heartily at my sister's dilemma; but rose immediately, and taking her humble place among the musical group, waited patiently until two young ladies had finished their well-known company duet; when the party could not do otherwise than make way for one whose pretensions all agreed to be unrivalled, though her style of singing was by no means popular.

I had watched these movements, and prepared my nerves for what I expected would be showing off in the highest style of country execution; in other words, making as much noise as the piano was capable of producing, when my ear was caught by one of the sweetest of Scotch ballads, sung by the clearest and most musical of voices, with rapid alternations of playfulness and pathos, that it seemed to come as fresh from the heart of the minstrel, as if it had never been played or sung before — a genuine burst of feelings, sung as the wild bird sings on his native tree. I had heard more powerful voices, and listened to performances more elaborate and complete, but it seemed to me

that I had never before listened to such free-born native music ; and when the song was ended, I found I had unconsciously placed myself beside the singer, while most of those who previously composed the musical group, had fallen back into their places, and were forming themselves into little coteries of laughter and of gossip around the room.

Miss Somerville rose from her seat.

"You are not tired," I exclaimed with impatience.

"Oh, no," she answered, "but I see my audience is. My style of music is not popular among them. They like their own much better ; and I must not monopolize."

My sister had now moved away to another part of the room ; and I consequently found myself tête-a-tête with the very person I most wished to avoid ; and who, unless she would be always singing to me, would, I believed, be nothing but intolerable. Contrary to my expectations, we fell into a most awkward silence, when suddenly the lady turned to me, and said, with a look of grave concern, "You seem to have a dreadful cold, air. It must be a sad bore to sit in such a room as this, and hear us all talking of

things you don't care about, with that ringing in the ear, and throbbing in the temples, which a bad cold produces. I know nothing worse to endure; and in charity to you, I am going to break up the party, by carrying off my father. But, stay one moment."

And she went hastily out of the room, without allowing me time to apologize for my stupidity and rudeness, on the score of that indisposition which she had so kindly noticed. My sister followed her, but soon returned.

"When will these people go away?" I asked with impatience.

"As soon as Mr. and Miss Somerville order their carriage."

"And why don't they order it now?"

"Because Miss Somerville is standing by the nursery-fire, making you a nostrum for your cold."

"What an unaccountable creature!" I exclaimed. "Why, I have been positively rude to her."

"That makes no difference with her," replied my sister. "She would cure the malady of an enemy, just as willingly as that of a friend."

"Then there is nothing personal in the matter," thought I, with a slight touch of disappointment.

In a few days this visit was to be returned; and so much were the effects of my bold alleviated by the means above alluded to, that I felt it would be impossible to make indisposition a plea for absenting myself from the party.

Somerville Hall was built in the old English style. It had a square flat front, with octagonal towers projecting a little at each end; and there were turrets, and recesses, and mullioned windows, and winding passages, and all sorts of things to be long remembered about it; but most of all the ivy. Never have I seen such deep, such rich festoons of ivy, as hung over the arched entrance of the eastern tower. And then there was that old-fashioned plant, with its bright red berries, and short green leaves, and the rambling clematis all about the front; while a white rose climbed up to the window of Kate's own room, as if to mark the purity and sacredness of that particular spot.

But I forget; for I was a long time before I thought there was anything sacred con-



nected with her ; and especially on the day I allude to, though she had cured my cold, I felt as if I owed her a sort of revenge, because I could not dislike her as I had intended ; and I thought of nothing but how pleasant it would be to bring her down, and humble her.

The avenue of elms through which we drove, did not lead directly to the house, though it commanded a view of it through many openings in the trees ; but when we had approached within a hundred yards, the road turned off into an open sweep, along a lawn of the smoothest turf, sloping down to a bright sparkling river, which watered the adjoining meadows, winding like a silver thread among the green tufts of ash, and birch, and willow, that fringed its verdant banks. In approaching nearer to the mansion, we passed along the side of a beautiful shrubbery, whose winding walks were scarcely visible among the thickly-grouping lilacs, and laburnums, and the weeping willows, that hung over the road.

On reaching this spot, my sister exclaimed with astonishment at the sight of an enormous mound of earth, which several

workmen were engaged in rearing, while beside them stood the master of the house, his attention being so entirely absorbed, that he did not observe our carriage pass. It was then I first learned that this excellent man—for excellent he certainly was in all qualities of the heart—was inveterately addicted to the habit of devoting himself to what are commonly called hobbies; and having no public pursuits, nor anything, in short, to lead him out of the narrow precincts of his hereditary domain, the restless spirit of invention, so often mistaken for that of improvement, had left its traces on many portions of his estate, where sums of money had been sunk sufficient to have cured a man less enterprising, of the fascinating, but dangerous habit of trying experiments on a large and expensive scale. In one part of his grounds, in particular, though happily remote from the house, was a ruinous heap of broken earth, interspersed with deep pits, beside which were scattered a few slightly-built sheds, unoccupied, and falling to decay. Here Mr. Somerville had once intended to establish a pottery; but the idea of digging for coal soon afterward presenting

itself to his mind, the latter gained the ascendancy; and another part of his estate presented an equally deserted scene, strewn with the vestiges of a project equally futile.

It was strange, as Kate used often to observe, that her father should allow these things to remain—that he should not employ some of his numerous host of laborers to smooth down the earth, and carry off the rubbish, in order to efface the memory of defeated enterprise. The disease of hobby-riding, had, however, the same symptoms and character with him, as with others. The object of the present moment, and the hopes it supplied, so entirely occupied his mind, that he seemed to feel neither the pain of wounded pride, nor that of disappointed effort. To him the future was all; and the past was consequently nothing.

To a superficial observer, Mr. Somerville presented a perfect picture of an amiable, peace-loving country-gentleman. And so in fact he was. He had not an unkind thought or feeling toward any human being. But at the same time he knew very little what human beings were. On the subject of chymical combinations, and patent ma-

chinery, his information was far more extensive, and his attention more easily excited. He would probably have fallen asleep, had any one talked to him of moral principle; and even on the finer distinctions of religious creed and party, he was neither an intelligent, nor a patient listener; although no man could be more strictly moral, as to general conduct, or more scrupulous in observing the religious forms to which he had been accustomed from his youth. Talk to Mr. Somerville, however, on some of his favorite subjects, tell him of some recent invention in mechanism, or discovery in science, and his eyes were lighted up with animation, his whole frame was instinct with another life, and he became for the instant a new and a different man.

Kate Somerville, tempted as she sometimes was to treat with playful satire her father's little peculiarities, still spoke of them with affectionate tenderness, saying they were so harmless, so droll, and they made him so happy. They had, however, two great disadvantages—they wasted his money; and they rendered him, what otherwise his good feeling could never have allowed him to be, at times excessively tiresome.

On arriving at Somerville Hall on the day alluded to, we saw my sister's friend already on the steps. Regardless of those forms of polished life, which would have detained her in the drawing-room until we entered; she rushed out to meet us, and even clasped my sister's hand at the door of the carriage.

Had a painter wished for a personification of all the ideas we are accustomed to embody in a true English welcome — a welcome entire, and hearty, and undisguised, he would have chosen Kate Somerville at that moment; nay, at any moment of that day, for her looks, her manners, the energy with which she stirred up a closely-packed fire, inquired after my cold, and drew the most comfortable chairs into the most comfortable places, made us feel at once, that we were making her happy, and ourselves at the same time. It is a nice art, that of making people feel glad they have been at the trouble of coming to see you. Kate Somerville understood it well.

"I have invited no one to meet you," she said, "except our good friend the clergyman, for I am a great economist of pleasure, and I wanted to have you all to ourselves."

The clergyman, who was a friendly and intelligent man, at that moment arrived ; and one of the party then inquired, what Mr. Somerville was so busy with in the garden.

"Pray, do not ask me," said the daughter, with evident chagrin. "There is something rising higher and higher every day ; but what it is to be, I am at a loss to imagine. Sometimes I have strong suspicions it is to be a volcano ; for you must know chymistry is all the rage with us at present.—Mr. Ferguson —"

"Is Mr. Ferguson here ?" asked the clergyman rather hastily.

"Oh, no," replied Kate, "or I should not have invited you. For though yours is an order which ought especially to live in charity with all men, I strongly suspect you, Mr. Forbes, of hating that man."

"I certainly should not choose Mr. Ferguson for my own private companion ;" replied Mr. Forbes. "But as to hating him, I hope I hate no man."

"Who is Mr. Ferguson ?" inquired my sister, "if it be fair to ask. I never heard of him before as being at all intimate here."

"He is a man of gas, and blow-pipes, and

steam-pressure," replied Kate, "and my father has conceived a great liking for him, because he is about to take out a patent for some wonderful invention. But really I pay so little attention to these things, that I am unable to tell you what it is. But here comes my good father, so now we will have dinner; and I hope none of you will require a patent invention for creating an appetite."

Mr. Somerville welcomed his guests with much of the genuine cordiality of his daughter, though he was a man of few words, except when some of his favorite subjects were introduced. Then indeed the case became a very protracted one; and my sister knowing by experience the difficulty of treating the good man's constitutional weakness, used to warn us off the dangerous ground with great tact and skill.

"You must not speak of his pleasure-grounds," she whispered, as we went into the dining-room; for though you will have to walk round them before the day is over, the longer you can put off this subject, the shorter your penance will be."

At the head of her father's table Miss Somerville appeared to great advantage. She

had lost her mother when a child, and the habit thus acquired of superintending the domestic arrangements of the family, had added, to the many good qualities with which her character was adorned, the peculiar excellence of a thorough knowledge of the practical part of domestic economy, combined with the delicacy and good taste which keep all display of such knowledge to its proper time and place.

The table at Somerville Hall was covered with what some would call "vulgar plenty," in short, with the best of country fare, and many of the greatest delicacies were of Kate's own making; for she despised nothing, which, as she used to say in homely phrase, "helped to make people comfortable."

"And you never like to make them uncomfortable?" said I: for her manner was one to invite freedom.

"Don't you remember," she replied, "when you were a child, and cried for nothing, your kind nurses used to give you a box on the ear by way of something to cry for? Now I confess, when I see people fastidious, and proud, and dissatisfied with those they



cannot understand, it does sometimes tempt me to give them something to dislike."

Had this remark been made with bitterness, it would probably have closed our acquaintance then and there, for I was perfectly aware of its application; but when I looked at the speaker, she was regarding me with such an animated and playful smile, that I could not choose but forgive her. Beside which, she was helping me to the wing of a chicken; so I was compelled to thank her, whether I felt grateful or not.

It seems a strange anomaly in human nature, that so many worthy people of respectable understanding, should, so far as their own practice is concerned, be unable to distinguish between being agreeable, and being tiresome. Poor Mr. Somerville had not the tact to perceive when the ladies had left the room, and the wine had been many times round the table, and he had fairly entered upon his then pet subject—the art of varying the surface of the earth, so as to produce gentle undulations in gardens and pleasure-grounds—that his guests were all sitting uneasily on their chairs, looking out of the window, or exchanging glances with each

other ; until at last, in order to change the scene, if not the subject, my brother proposed a stroll in the grounds, and we gladly rose from the table ; for the dinner-hour at Somerville Hall was the same as in the olden time — so early as to admit of a walk before tea.

On reaching the garden, it was a matter of astonishment to us that the master of the house was not ashamed, but actually proud, to show us what eight workmen, two carts, and four horses, were doing in his grounds, and in what was once the loveliest spot of all. He had imbibed the notion, however, that this particular part was too flat, and in proportion to the great mound we had seen in approaching, were deep hollows, where the water now stood in pools. The flower-beds too, on which Kate, and even her father, had once bestowed so much time and taste, were all scooped out and carried away, or else covered over with the mound of earth, which was to be crowned with a Grecian temple, as the finishing stroke of beauty.

But we were all glad to forget these little absurdities, in a man who could lead us back to his fire-side, with the kind and cor-

dial feelings which seemed ever to be glowing at the heart of Mr. Somerville ; though he left it to his daughter to express in a more animated manner, what only could be read in the bland and quiet expression of his cheerful face. Nor was there much to be apprehended from his monopoly of the conversation, when his daughter was present ; for she had the art of making the evening pass away so pleasantly, that, contrary to all my calculations, I was really sorry when the time arrived for us to leave the hospitable Hall ; and I bade good night to Kate Somerville with a conviction that whatever one's previous impressions might be, it was impossible to dislike her in her own house.

It is true she seemed not always sufficiently gentle, that she was often abrupt, and sometimes pert ; but then she was so kindly solicitous for every one's comfort ; so forgetful of her own, so quick to perceive every little peculiarity of taste or feeling, and so watchful of every opportunity to afford pleasure to her guests, that the most polished gentlewoman could not have rivalled her in the art of making every one satis-

fied with the position he held at her father's fireside.

"What happy evenings we always spend here!" exclaimed my sister, as soon as we were again seated in the carriage, where we had offered Mr. Forbes a place; "Miss Somerville leaves us nothing to wish for, either in her heart, or her home."

"A little more quiet would sometimes be an advantage," said Mr. Langton, settling himself to sleep.

"It is, indeed, a delightful place," observed the clergyman, very gravely; "and Miss Somerville is a delightful girl; yet I own, I never visit the Hall, without feeling that one thing is wanting."

"And pray what is that?" I inquired; not quite satisfied that any one beside myself should enjoy the pleasure of finding fault with Miss Somerville — "and pray what do you find wanting?"

"Religion" — was the startling reply.

"What!" I exclaimed. "Have they really no religion?"

"Do not mistake me," said the clergyman. "They are church-going people, and they have a high standard of moral feeling,

which I am not aware that they ever violate."

"And what more would you have? Are we not told that 'the tree is known by its fruit'?"

"In prosperous seasons, my young friend, the tree which has but little root, may possibly produce good fruit. The question is, how long will it continue to do so? It is in seasons of temptation and trial that we see the difference between those who have admired religion at a distance, and those who have made it a matter of personal concern—between those who have simply a knowledge that they are weak and erring creatures, and those who have felt the necessity of laying hold of the means of salvation."

"But in a home so peaceful and remote as theirs, they must be out of the reach of temptation, if not of trial."

"Ah! who shall say into what paradise of earth the serpent may not enter!"

"I think you cannot trace it here."

"Is not the mere fact of living without any definite purpose or aim, beyond the amusement of the present moment, a proof that we are tempted to the sins of omission at least?"

“But I have heard that Miss Somerville is both industrious and charitable in an eminent degree ; and who can accuse her father of living without an object, when improvement is the end he has perpetually in view ?”

“I have too much respect for the family,” continued Mr. Forbes, “to speak longer in this strain — that is, to speak of them, rather than *to* them, respecting their faults. I will only observe, in connexion with this subject, that few persons are permitted to go on to the end of their lives, in a state of self-deception with regard to their religious foundation. Those who have no belief, and make no profession, too frequently die as they have lived : but a religious professor who wants the vital principle of Christian life, is usually — and I may add, mercifully — brought into some state of trial or temptation, under which he is compelled either to lay hold of the only means of support, or to fall from the false position he has held, and thus exhibit to the world the just consequences of his fatal error. My opinion has always been, that we are too apt to blame the world for leading us astray, and to think that if we neither see nor hear what is evil

among others, we shall escape its influence altogether. Alas ! how many wretched beings have fled the infected city, and found they had the plague-spot on themselves ! How many more have shunned the companionship of men, to feel in the end that they were only fit for that of fallen spirits."

It appeared to me at that time, that the remarks of Mr. Forbes were unreasonably strict, and unkindly severe ; for I was young and inexperienced, and had not lived to know that our most dangerous enemies are often found within ourselves.

Mine was a delusion under which thousands, and tens of thousands, labor — that of believing it is sufficient to be kind, and generous, and respectable, and beloved ; and that no temptation can reach us, so long as we admire and practise whatsoever is amiable.

Let us look to the end, and see whether the season of trial may not arrive even in old age — whether the tree may not fall before the blast, even when its lofty boughs have blossomed and borne fruit — whether the richly-freighted vessel may not be wrecked even on its homeward way, and with the haven full in view.

## CHAPTER II.

It made a great breach in our enjoyment of the hospitality of Somerville Hall, when Mr. Ferguson joined us, as he sometimes did that winter. On my first interview with him, I felt surprised that a man so gentlemanly as Mr. Somerville should be able to find pleasure in his society, for he was anything but attractive in his own person. Yet on farther observation I found him possessed of considerable talent; and if not open himself, gifted with the power of unfolding the characters of those around him.

“Will you do me a great kindness,” said Kate, one morning when he had been invited to spend the day with us; “will you watch that man for me, and tell me what you think of him? For I cannot make up my mind whether he is rather good, or wholly bad—tolerably respectable, or altogether mean.”

“How long have you known him?” I inquired.



"Nearly four months."

"I should certainly say then, that a man who inspires no confidence in an acquaintance of four months, must, at best, be more bad than good."

"Yet he has some redeeming qualities — he listens patiently to my poor father's stories."

It struck me at that moment, that Mr. Ferguson might possibly have his own interest in doing this ; but I watched him through the day, and gave my report in the evening, as I had been requested, without betraying any of the suspicions which were beginning to gain ground in my own mind. My evidence, though confined to subjects of a superficial nature, was far from satisfactory ; and, as if by a kind of tacit understanding, we ceased to mention Mr. Ferguson to each other, though his presence had the same effect upon us all ; resembling what certain writers have described as operating upon the agents of supernatural power, by that of some being not of their own order.

Much as I now admired Miss Somerville in her father's house, I was not aware of some points of excellence in her still undis-

ciplined character, until one morning, when my sister wished particularly to see her friend, and I was sent, by no means an unwilling ambassador to the Hall, to request that she would ride back with me, and spend the remainder of the day with us.

I found her in the hall on this occasion in close conversation with an old woman of the neighboring village, whose daughter lay at the point of death ; and so entirely was her attention occupied, that she only bowed as I entered, and waved her hand for me to pass into the dining-room. She soon joined me there, with her accustomed welcome, and when I told her the object of my visit, she willingly acceded to my sister's wishes, endeavoring only to stipulate that I should not wait for her, but allow her to ride alone.

"You must not object to this," she added, "on the score of propriety, for it is what I am accustomed to ; and though it may appear to you a breach of decorum for a young lady of nineteen to ride alone, you would find it difficult to convince me, that it is not in reality more safe, and more prudent, for a girl, who, like me, has managed her own affairs from her childhood, to ride a

sure-footed pony alone, through a neighborhood where she is both known and respected, than to be accompanied through highways and byways by a servant with whom she is but little acquainted."

"But a gentleman-friend."

"A gentleman-friend!" she exclaimed, interrupting me with impatience, "where is he to be found? A motherless girl cannot be too careful how she yields to the delusion of making friends of gentlemen; and if you were not Lucy Langton's brother, and did not dislike me besides, I certainly should not ride with you."

There was no arguing with Kate Somerville on subjects like this. She knew little, and cared less, about the conventional rules of polished life. Whatever point was discussed, she went directly to the question of its good or evil nature; and acting on the same principle—regarding only what she believed to be essentially right or wrong—she necessarily often did what the world would have condemned; and sometimes even acted in a manner, which, however justifiable to herself, might, on a wider scale of influence, have been injurious to the well-being of society.

"Leaving the argument of propriety, then," said I, "entirely out of the question, you will surely permit me to ride with you as a personal gratification."

"I must dispute with you again," said she, "for it would be no gratification to any one to ride with me this morning. I am not going to amble over grassy downs, nor simply to enjoy the freshness of the exercise and the air. I am under the necessity of making several calls in the village; and if you ride with me, you will have to wait for me at the cottage-doors, with more patience than I imagine you to possess."

"And is that the extent of your second objection?"

"It is said that a woman's true reason comes last; and I believe mine is yet untold. But you shall hear it if you wish, for I am not skilled in concealing the truth."

"By all means. I believe I shall like your last reason better than the first."

"Well then, there is nothing I despise so much as the affectation of what is good. Do you like my reasoning so far?"

"Extremely."

"Now, it so happens that from our posi-

tion in the country, my father and I have become intimately acquainted with the affairs of all the poor people in the neighboring village. It was the habit of my mother to associate herself much with the weal and the wo of those around her, and my father has brought me up to do the same."

"And how is it possible," I exclaimed, "that any proof of the active power of such benevolence should operate to your disadvantage?"

"Just because you do not understand me; and if any of these poor people should exhibit their gratitude, as they sometimes do, in a very disproportionate and unreasonable manner, you would look upon it all as a scene got up for the occasion to make me appear in your eyes the 'Lady Bountiful' of the village."

Of course I disclaimed all tendency to such injurious suspicions; but Miss Somerville seemed to have understood the nature of my feelings toward her from the first; and leaving me, as I thought, rather haughtily, to prepare for her ride, I remained in perfect ignorance as to whether my company was really irksome or otherwise.

I had never before that day seen Kate Somerville on horseback. A black pony of uncommon symmetry was led to the door, and the lady soon appeared in her riding-dress, which became her more than any other. She was indeed the queen of equestrians. The old servant who held her rein, looked proudly at his mistress, then at me, and then at the pony. It had been taught to stand perfectly still, until she was fairly in the saddle, when it bounded from the ground, and danced upon the green sward, in a manner that would have unseated a less skilful rider.

No doubt the lady herself was a little vain of this display; for when she shook back her glossy ringlets from her brow and cheek, I could see that its color was heightened; and while she stretched her hand among the animal's flowing mane, and patted its arched and beautiful neck, she looked aside at me with a merry laugh, which told how completely the subject of our late conversation was forgotten in the excitement of that moment.

Miss Somerville looked both so happy and so well on horseback, that it was with feel-

ings of pride as well as pleasure, I accompanied her in her morning's ride, which, however, turned out to be a very different affair from what I had expected, notwithstanding all she had told me of her intentions. No sooner had we reached the village through which our road lay, than I found my patience put to the test by stopping at almost every door. Even at the auberge, or hotel, as it was called, where a red lion swung high in air—even there Kate Somerville reined in her steed, and striking sharply at the door with her riding-whip, desired to speak with the master of the house.

"The girl is possessed," thought I. "What can she want here?"

"I want to speak with Mr. Giles," said Miss Somerville to the woman who had answered her summons; and immediately the master himself came forward, and asked if she would be pleased to alight.

"No, no," said Kate, "I only want to speak to you about old Stephenson, the gardener. He has joined the temperance society, and I don't want you to be tempting him to violate his pledge. I see you are

laughing at what you think his folly. You can do that as much as you please ; but remember he has been on the brink of ruin, and it is a great thing for an old man like him to begin a new course of life. If, therefore, he falls away again by your persuasion, the sin will lie at your door. So look to it, if you please, Mr. Giles ; for we hear of a good deal that passes in your house."

At the commencement of this conversation, just and praiseworthy as it certainly was, I had felt a strange nervous sensation creep over me, by no means lessened on observing that we were stationed in the most conspicuous part of a populous village, and on a public road, where carriages were every moment liable to pass. It is true, I was myself too much a stranger in the neighborhood, to run any risk of recognition ; but I was annoyed beyond measure, to be under the necessity of waiting for a young lady engaged in such a conversation, and in such a place. Nor was the spirit of gallantry which inspired me at the commencement of our ride, at all revived by observing the arch smile which played upon the lips of Kate



Somerville, as she turned to condole with me on my trying situation. I was even contemplating the possibility of leaving her, as she had originally proposed, when she added, with a total change of look and manner, "You must really have patience with me now; for this is the house where the poor young woman is so ill; and I don't know how long I shall be obliged to stay."

"Well, Peggy!" said she to the afflicted mother, who came out to meet her, wiping her eyes with her apron, "you see I am behind my time; but I hope I am not too late."

"Oh! no, miss;" replied the woman. And she began again her story of often-repeated sorrows; when Kate suddenly turned back to me, and, with a look of serious concern, requested I would leave her, as she felt really grieved to trespass so much on my time.

Had this request been made five minutes earlier, I should certainly have complied; but the tenderness of her manner, when she addressed the old woman, and the entire change her character appeared to have undergone, interested me too deeply; and dis-

mounting, in order to fasten both our horses with greater security, I sat down on a low bench beside the cottage-wall.

The humble tenement which the sufferer within was about to exchange for one of still narrower dimensions, was neater, and more respectable, than many in the village. The window of the sick-room, beside which I had unconsciously chosen my seat, was overgrown with ivy; and the casement being thrown open to admit more air into the chamber of death, I found that in the position I had taken, I could not avoid hearing much of what passed within. What, then, was my surprise to find that Kate Somerville could, when the occasion seemed to demand it, speak in tones of the gentlest soothing; while with her own hand she performed many of those tender offices, which the last stage of human suffering demands.

In this work of charity she was disturbed by the feeble cry of a young child, which seemed to distress her beyond measure; for, drawing the old woman nearer to the window, she said in a whisper loud enough for me to hear, "Why don't you send away the poor baby, just for a few days? It is

impossible for you to do your duty both to the mother and the child."

"But where am I to send it, miss?" said the grandmother. "She pines after it sadly, and I am sure if I was to send it away, the thought of what I had done would disturb her last moments. There, now, she hears it, and points to the cradle; and that is just the little pitiful cry it will keep up till night-fall. If I did but know of anybody that would take it, it would be a great mercy to us all."

"Alice," said Kate, returning to the bed where the poor young woman lay, "will you trust your baby with me for a few days? I will take great care of it."

"Oh! yes, to be sure, miss," replied a low husky voice, that was scarcely intelligible; "it could not be in better hands."

A convulsive cough then came on, and every moment threatened suffocation; but no sooner was the paroxysm over, than the sufferer sunk again into a heavy sleep; and Kate, taking advantage of the opportunity, hastened to the door, with the infant in her arms.

"Give me something to wrap it in," said

she ; " a cloak — a shawl — anything will do. There is Jane Butler at the lodge. I am sure she will be kinder to it than any one ; and I will bring you tidings of it every day."

" But who is going to take it to her ?" asked the old woman ; " I dare not trust it to my boy."

" I will tell you who will take it," said Kate Somerville, bounding into her saddle, and stretching out her arms for the child — " I will take it myself, for the sooner it is beyond the hearing of its poor mother, the better."

And so there we actually were again upon the high-road, riding back to the hall, and Kate Somerville with the baby in her lap ; yet managing so well both that and her horse, that we reached the lodge without a fold of the cloak being displaced, and, probably, without the young traveller itself being aware of any change from its warm cradle in the cottage.

Had I endeavored, during this part of our ride, to analyze my feelings, I should have found the task impossible ; for, notwithstanding the horror it might have occasioned had we met any of my college friends by the way,

I doubt whether I did not like Miss Somerville the better for this forgetfulness of self — of appearances — of everything, in short, but the necessity of the case, and the strong impulse under which she acted.

“There,” said she, after placing the child in the hands of Jane Butler, with many charges as to its care and treatment — “there is nothing like transacting one’s own business. Had I left it to those old women, they would have consulted about this little affair all day, until the poor mother would have been distracted with their foolish talk. And now we will ride as fast as you please, for Mr. Langton will wonder what has become of us.”

It was on this day that my brother first thought it right to warn me against the insidious nature of my growing intimacy with Miss Somerville. Of course I disclaimed all idea, and even all desire, of rendering our acquaintance more than the mere pastime of the moment; yet it was not wholly without some secret satisfaction that I read in his manner, as well as that of my sister, a lurking desire that it should be cherished into something more than friendship. Still it

was no part of my plan of conduct to commit myself by any act or word that could be so construed. I only tried the often-practised experiment of drawing on a correspondence, which, as the time of my departure for India was at hand, I felt as if I had a reasonable plea for proposing. In this, however, my hopes were disappointed; for thoughtless and independent as the behavior of Miss Somerville in some respects unquestionably was, in others there was a guarded caution, of which no man could take advantage.

“Without a mother,” she said, “and without a friend whom I can consult about the common affairs of life, I have been compelled to lay down rules for my own conduct; and one of these has been, never to enter into a correspondence with a gentleman. I might have said, never to make a friend of one; but I feel, now that you are on the point of leaving us, perhaps for ever, that I shall miss you in our social circle, almost as much as if you had been the friend of many years. I have everything in the world I desire, except a friend. You will think this strange when your amiable sister is so near me. But a married woman, and a mother, ought to

have, and must have, her own little circle of absorbing interest, within which another cannot enter."

"You will find this friend, most probably, long before I return; when the feeling of friendship will have given place to a happier and closer attachment."

"Never, while my father lives. As he grows older, he will need me more and more; and perhaps a few years will make me a fitter companion for his old age."

It was the day of my last visit to Somerville Hall, when this conversation took place. I was mortified on this occasion to find myself confronted at table by Mr. Ferguson, who took his place on the opposite side with great complacency. I was mortified, too, that I had not succeeded in drawing Miss Somerville into a correspondence; for notwithstanding the prejudice her character and manners had at first excited in my mind, I felt daily and hourly that her society was becoming more essential to my enjoyment. It is true, she was not of the class of women I admired. She was, in fact, of no class. Yet she possessed what so many are defi-

cient in — the power, not only of awakening interest, but of keeping it alive.

As soon as it was possible to leave the table on this occasion, Miss Somerville rose from her seat ; and much as I wished to follow her, I was kept back by a feeling of wounded pride, which, however, had its own punishment ; for instead of enjoying the last evening I should spend for many years, alone with the woman who of all others interested me most, I sat, as if chained to the table, while the gentleman of the house told long stories about things I neither cared for, nor understood.

For a long time I remained in a sort of stupor, fixed in the same position, filling my glass when the decanter was pushed toward me, and nodding my ready assent whenever Mr. Somerville appealed to me for my opinion. At last the question suddenly flashed across my mind — what can it be that brings Mr. Ferguson here so often, and keeps him here so long ? Is it the love of wine ? for the lord of the mansion was more than commonly addicted to the old-fashioned hospitality, which presses wine upon a guest. But no. This was no solution of the enigma ;



for Mr. Ferguson was a man upon whom wine appeared to produce no effect.

The case was widely different with the good-natured master of the house; and I now saw, for the first time, the influence that wine was capable of exerting, both over his appearance and his character. His whole manner, in fact, was changed. His words were no longer cautious and well chosen. He was no longer on his guard against receiving a false impression. But while his dark eyes sparkled with uncommon lustre, and his movements were quick and restless, touch but upon some favorite project, and all the hidden energies of his nature seemed to rise like an uncontrollable flood.

Was it possible that Mr. Ferguson could be playing upon this kind-hearted old man, for his own selfish purposes; and bending him to his views by this unnatural agency? My feelings recoiled from such a thought; yet what sympathy could there be between this cold-blooded unfathomable man, and one whose heart was warmed in no common degree by the kindest feelings of human nature?

Unable to look steadily at the contrast

these two characters presented, or to contemplate the unequal ground upon which they would meet, should the interest of one in any way interfere with that of the other, I rose from the table, and walked out upon the lawn, to enjoy the refreshment of a clear moonlight evening.

The train of my reflections led me back at that moment to the conversation of the clergyman who had regretted the absence of religion in his family ; and I began to perceive that there might be temptations within the most privileged and secluded sphere of human life. "After all," said I, "there must be something in the idea of this good man, there must be something to fall back upon in the hour of trial, something to protect us in the season of temptation."

Such were the vague conclusions which my short and superficial acquaintance with human life at that time produced in my mind. I had seen, in the pleasant home in which I had lately been received almost as a member of the family, a combination of all that we are accustomed to associate with our ideas of earthly happiness—health, and wealth, and freedom from anxiety, with a

love of rural occupations, and a situation more than commonly calculated to prolong these blessings.

What then was wanting? Not kind feelings, not cultivated intellect, not time or means for the improvement of every good gift which the hand of a beneficent Creator can bestow. Yet that something must be wanting was evident, for the "serpent sin," was already entering this garden of Eden, and threatening to poison the peaceful streams by which its flowery paths had hitherto been refreshed.

Here was a proof, then, that it is not from without that our worst enemies assail us. Here the world — as we are accustomed to understand that word — was in a manner excluded. Society brought no contamination here. The theatre of ambitious hope offered no temptation to enlist in its struggles. Pecuniary privations inflicted no wound upon the goaded spirit. Nor was the revelry of party feeling known within this peaceful home.

Were all its inmates, therefore, necessarily safe? Alas! no. There are traitors within, as well as foes without the camp;

and the general who would be sure of his resources, should have a talisman by which to try the heart of every man in his army.

Religion is this talisman. Without its test, there is no safety even where the situation is most secure, where danger appears most distant, and protection most certain.

## CHAPTER III.

PASSING over the seven years I spent in India, as having no connexion with the family whose history I would trace out, I take up my story again at the time when I returned to repair a shattered constitution in my native land.

The letters of my sister during my absence had been too much those of a domestic wife, and affectionate mother, to be occupied at any great length, by affairs that were foreign to her own fireside; and they were, moreover, strongly tinged with a fault, by no means uncommon in letters that travel far and seldom, for they contained vague allusions to circumstances, which it seemed to be taken for granted by the writer I knew perfectly well, but of which I was in reality as ignorant as if they had transpired in the moon. Thus, whatever had been the state of my feelings on

leaving my native country, the darkness in which I was kept for the space of seven years, with regard to the real situation of Kate Somerville, would have been sufficient to quench the knight-errantry of a more ardent admirer than myself; while the different scenes into which I had been plunged, with the failure of my health, and other circumstances of an equally absorbing nature, tended greatly to weaken the impression which her society had made upon my youthful fancy.

Revisiting the same scenes has, however, a powerful effect in calling back the associations with which those scenes have been connected; and no sooner had I set foot in England, than my thoughts went back to Kate Somerville; and I recollected with some complacency, that none of my sister's letters had conveyed the intelligence of her being married.

Having no near relative in England, except my sister; and the state of my health rendering it desirable that I should enjoy the advantage of easy and cheerful society; I willingly accepted the invitation of Mr. Langton, to make his house my resting-place

for at least some weeks. Late one evening, and weary with my journey, I consequently arrived at his hospitable home, where there was little to remind me of the lapse of time since I had last trod that threshold, except the increased number of little faces, which peeped with much suspicion at the invalid uncle, whom they had so often been charged neither to disturb nor annoy.

Yet, notwithstanding these precautions so kindly meant, there is something which does both disturb and annoy a nervous invalid, in being the object of marked consideration. He likes well enough to have his tastes and feelings consulted; yet, by a strange perverseness in human nature, is irritated by having the peculiarities of his taste and distaste specified and pointed at. I never felt this more forcibly, than when my sister, in her good nature, described to her young brood, how uncle liked this, and disliked the other; until my different fancies became like watchwords among them, to warn them off from my displeasure, or entitle them to my good will.

Not many days, however, had passed over, before the little rebels had so won upon me,

that I could forgive them this, as well as many other heinous faults ; and I had one morning actually gone so far, as to be betrayed into a revery upon the desirableness, of being married and settled in life myself, when the whole pack burst in upon me, with the intelligence that Aunt Kate had arrived, and was going to stay the day.

Now much as I had wished to see my early friend, and many as had been the indirect inquiries I had put to my sister, about things connected with her, rather than about herself ; the idea of actually seeing her then, and there, shook my nerves beyond the possibility of giving me pleasure ; and I wished from my heart, she had delayed her visit, if only for another day.

There is, in fact, an awful chasm made in every kind of friendship, by an absence of seven years. For two or three, one goes along with the chain of events that happen at a distance. Even four do not absolutely break the silken cord. But seven !—It is beyond all calculation how any one will look and feel after a lapse of seven years ; and a meeting under such circumstances, however eagerly it may have been desired,



must at first be fraught with a considerable portion of absolute pain.

Beside all this, I had certain tumultuous recollections of Kate Somerville. The picture my imagination retained of her was altogether without repose. It is true, it had charmed my youthful fancy ; but sick, and sated with the vivid coloring of an Eastern clime, I had returned with too true a longing for the coolness and the quiet of my native land, to wish for anything that would rouse me from the apathy, into which, from a long continued course of failing health, I was gradually sinking.

With such feelings, it is no wonder that I spent an unusual time at my toilet that day ; for beside the reluctance I felt to meet any one beyond our family party, there lurked about my heart a secret desire to make the best I could of a faded complexion ; and so to arrange my hair, that the few silver threads which already began to glisten about my temples, should not easily be detected.

In these laudable efforts, I know not how far I succeeded ; but I remember, that when the second bell had rung for dinner, I was still undecided which cravat was most be-

coming, and whether I was invalid enough to go down in my embroidered slippers.

When I first saw Kate Somerville that day, I confess my recollection was at fault. She was stooping down among a group of children; my eye caught only her profile, and I was at a loss to recognise, in the pale, thin, dark woman before me, the laughing girl I had left seven years before. She started up, however, as I approached; and, advancing toward me, held out her hand in her accustomed cordial manner, when I caught at once the flash of her deep, dark eyes, and the glitter of her white teeth, as she smiled, and spoke with that heart-warm vivacity which I had never found in any other woman.

I have said that seven years make an awful chasm in friendship. They make an awful change in youth and beauty too. I could not tell what had come over Kate Somerville, but her smile died away the moment she had done speaking; and though she laughed again, once or twice, during dinner, that wild musical laugh that used to vibrate through us all like an electric spark, her countenance became serious almost be-

fore the sound had ceased, and one was tempted to ask from what invisible source that voice of mirth had come.

It was impossible to look at the pale, sunken countenance before me, and not feel, that to one of us at least, the experience of the last seven years had been heavily laden. Illness had laid its burden upon my frame; but it was too clearly perceptible that hers had been the sickness of the soul, and I felt smitten with grief and shame, that I had not hastened down to offer her the greeting of an old and faithful friend—above all, that I should have bestowed, in connexion with her, a single thought upon the trifles of my toilet.

Kate Somerville had never been solicitous to please by those means in which so many women place the secret of their power—her dress; and in this respect she seemed now to have forgotten the natural vanity of her sex. She was dressed in the simplest, plainest style imaginable; and had the glossy ringlets of her long dark hair required more than a moment's thought, they would never have fallen in such luxuriant beauty over her brow and cheek.

By my sister's children, Kate Somerville was little less than worshipped; and notwithstanding she both gave the law among them, and administered summary justice, they desired nothing so much as to monopolise her whole attention; while, on every symptom she evinced of yielding herself to their caresses, she was enclosed in all their little arms at once.

She had never looked so amiable to me, as in the midst of this little group; and I could not help mentally exclaiming, "Is this the woman who has no one to help her to bear the weight of sorrowful experience? No one to sooth her in affliction? No bosom-friend to shield and cherish her?"

I think she must have read my thoughts in the long earnest gaze I fixed upon her; for, though she suddenly averted her face, and stooped down to attend to one of the children, I could see that the rosy blush of former days had risen to her cheek; and when she looked up, and spoke to me again, there was a glistening in her eyes, like the trace of tears which had been driven back.

Altogether there was a mystery about Kate Somerville which I vainly attempted to un-

ravel; not was it until my strength enabled me to accept the invitation of her father to spend a day at the Hall, that I could form any conjecture as to the change which seven years had produced in her character and appearance.

The first mild day of spring weather, I spent in revisiting scenes once so familiar, that I should have believed it impossible ever to forget them; and yet, as we pursued our way, I had to trust myself to the guidance of my companion, to lead me along the nearest path. Perhaps I ought rather to say, to the guidance of her horse, for she herself appeared to be entirely absorbed in her own thoughts; so much so, that she answered me at random when I spoke to her, and for the sake of keeping up the conversation, made the most common-place remarks—a fault which she, of all women, had formerly been least addicted to.

“I am happy,” said I, as we stopped, as in by-gone days, to gaze upon a favorite scene, “I am happy to find something still unchanged. Tell me, Miss Somerville, shall I see the old Hall the same?”

“The house,” she answered very gravely,

"is little altered. It has still a bright fire for a winter's evening, and a warm welcome for an old friend. But how is it, when all the world grows weary with the same thing, that you alone find fault with change?"

"No one likes to meet with changes in their friends."

"Oh, yes! when they grow better. When they turn grave, for instance, after they have been too flippant."

She said this with a look and tone so like her former self, that the barrier of reserve was at once broken between us, and we were Kate and Arthur to each other again, apparently with the tacit understanding that we stood in all respects on the footing of our former friendship.

"Yes, Kate," said I, "you were indeed rather flippant when I was last here. And now I have need to listen to your voice, and hear you call me by my name, to believe you are the same."

"I am not the same," she replied in a voice rendered tremulous by suppressed emotion. "You will be mistaken indeed if you expect to find me so. Yet the change you cannot but observe, is not the effect of any distinct

calamity. One affliction, however great, is seldom sufficient to bow down the spirit; especially such a spirit as mine. It is the gnawing anxiety of years, that nature is unable to sustain."

"But you can have had no anxieties, Kate. Your father still lives"——

"Let us ride on," said she, hastily, "we shall keep him waiting for his dinner."

We pursued our way accordingly, and as we approached her father's house, notwithstanding she had told me it remained unchanged, I could not but observe a want of neatness in the fences, and an aspect of neglect about the grounds, which, however, I accounted for in my own mind, by the circumstance of her father's advancing years, and the probability that he was less accustomed than formerly, to superintend his laborers himself.

On entering the court-yard, this aspect of indescribable forlornness was still more striking. Grass and weeds had grown almost entirely over the stones, and one or two shutters were hanging from the windows of the lower offices by a single nail, while others swung to and fro in the wind. But for the melan-

choly aspect which pervaded the scene, I might easily have dreamed myself back again, and have believed it had been only the day, or the week before, that I had trod those stones; for, to my utter astonishment, who should I see but the identical figure of Mr. Ferguson advancing toward us, and looking precisely the same as when I had seen him last. I observed on his first appearance that Miss Somerville's color rose, and when he took hold of her rein, and attempted to assist her from her horse, she suddenly sprung to the ground, thus leaving him the privilege of calling the groom, or of conducting it to the stable himself.

"You are longing to find something unchanged," said she, as I walked beside her to the door, "look at that man!"

On all my former visits to the Hall, the kind and hospitable master of the house had been one of the first to welcome my arrival. The elasticity of his step, the air of ancient gentility which pervaded his whole appearance, but above all, the cordial shake of his hand, were never to be forgotten by those who had been his guests; and I felt on the present occasion a little disappointed, that he did not



meet me as before. Nor was this feeling unmingled with a fear that he might be suffering from the decrepitude of age. On entering the drawing-room, however, I found him seated in an arm-chair beside the fire; and, though he then rose to welcome me, I had some difficulty in assuring myself of his identity. It was not altogether age which had wrought the change so evident in his appearance; but a combination of many causes, and especially one, the extent of which I was not then fully aware of. There was something about him which both shocked and grieved me, though I should have been at a loss to say why. He seemed as if, in the full possession of his bodily powers, he had sunk prematurely into a state of mental — or rather moral weakness — so much so, that I felt a difficulty in addressing him on any of the usual topics of conversation.

It was no doubt evident to the quick eye of his daughter, that I was contemplating her father's altered appearance with surprise and sorrow; for she instantly endeavored to divert my attention, and during the whole time we sat at the dinner-table, she did this with so much tact and skill, that I had no oppor-

tunity, even if I had felt the inclination, to pursue my observations farther. She had previously requested me, in a manner half-playful and half-serious, not to sit long after dinner ; and I had no difficulty in complying with her request, for a painful scene presented itself on her leaving the room. Mr. Somerville then grew talkative, and even jocose, and would have entered at great length into some of his favorite schemes for the benefit of mankind, had not Mr. Ferguson checked his garrulity, by exercising over him a kind of mysterious influence, to which the old man appeared to have become but too willing a slave.

It was indeed not difficult for me to tear myself from such society, to join Kate Somerville in the drawing-room. I found her seated by the fire, her head resting on her hands, and her whole attitude and appearance betraying the deepest melancholy. Yet she started up as I approached, shook off her revery, and endeavored to converse in her accustomed spirited and lively manner. I could discover, however, that her thoughts were wandering ; and often during the course of the evening, when I was engaged in an-

swering questions which she had asked for the sole purpose of keeping me occupied, I could see that her attention was turned to the door, as if she was listening for some expected sound.

At last there were sounds from the dining-room ; perhaps of the most humiliating and painful description to which the human ear has ever been accustomed — sounds which indicated, but too plainly, the degradation of old age — consisting of fits of childish laughter, of a tremulous and broken voice raised above its natural height ; and then of sudden deep low tones of imperious command, as if the victim of his own folly would still assert a sort of dominion over others.

Kate Somerville opened the piano, and began to play a lively air.

"It is not often," she said, "that ladies invite themselves to sing ; but here is an old Scotch ballad that I think will just suit your taste ; unless, indeed, seven years have altered you as much as they have altered some others."

I disclaimed, of course, all change of taste in this respect ; and she began to sing without farther prelude.

I have looked at the faces of what are called good singers, when their voices were in full operation, and the charm of their performance has been instantly destroyed ; but with Kate Somerville the case was widely different. She had too much truth, even in her countenance, for it to suffer distortion under the influence of music so sweet and touching as her own ; and it was not the least charm among the many she possessed, that when she was singing, you might gaze with pleasure, as well as listen with delight.

There was certainly something in her music which exercised a sort of spell over me, for no sooner was her ballad concluded, than I forgot myself so far as to exclaim — “This will not do, Kate. You must not sing to me, unless you are prepared to go back with me to India, to share the good and the evil of my wandering and uncertain life.”

I never shall forget her manner of receiving this very dubious expression. She neither smiled nor blushed, but looked at me for one moment with a degree of distressing earnestness ; then, closing the piano, she walked to the other end of the room,

took a chair by the fire, and as soon as I had joined her, began to question me in a very commonplace but determined manner, about some of the customs of the East.

This conversation was only interrupted by the servant bringing in tea, which we took alone, there being no disposition in those we had left at the dinner-table to join our party.

The tea-service had scarcely been dismissed, when Miss Somerville was called out of the room, and such were the confused and mysterious sounds in the hall, which immediately followed, that I unconsciously, and by a sort of natural impulse, opened the door. What, then, was the horror I experienced, on beholding the almost senseless, and deathlike form of Mr. Somerville supported in the arms of his servants, and borne, as quietly as they could carry him, to his own chamber. My attention, however, was chiefly directed to the figure of his daughter, who had placed her arms beneath her father, with his head resting on her shoulder, and his white hair against her cheek, and who in this manner took her part—the most arduous of all—in bearing the helpless burden.

Shocked at having been the witness of such a scene, I still persuaded myself none of the party had observed that I was so; when Kate Somerville, on returning to the room, entered immediately upon the subject by alluding to what I had seen.

"I am little skilled," said she, "in keeping my feelings to myself. And why should I attempt it, when the cause of my disquietude is so obvious. My poor father" ——

And as she uttered these words, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into an agony of tears.

"You know," she continued, as soon as she had partially recovered her self-possession, "that he used to be fond of sitting long at the table over his wine. But I never thought it would come to this! And that man — that cruel man — keeps humoring him up to his bent, and I have no influence with him whatever."

"Have you tried your influence?" I asked, "Have you spoken to him on this subject, kindly and candidly?"

"Why, no. There lies my sorrow, and my guilt. There lies my difficulty, too. My poor father, you know, was always so cor-

rect, and so precise, that I thought he would be shocked beyond measure, and offended past forgiving me, if I hinted such a thing to him in the beginning of the evil; and then as it grew, and became established, I felt more and more repugnance to act so ungenerous a part, for he had ever been so indulgent and so kind to me, it seemed too dreadful to be thought of, that I should turn upon him with the accusation of so gross a sin. So, as I said, the thing went on: and now it would be of no use, for I believe he has lost the power to resist."

"You might still make the experiment," said I. "That could do no harm; and you would at least enjoy the satisfaction of having done a part of your duty."

"I wish I could," she answered; "from my heart I wish I could. But, strange as it may seem, I want the moral courage. When I first began to see the evil, I thought I should be able to speak, if it increased; and now I think I should be better able, were it only commencing. And, so it is — we shrink from the most obvious duty, until the time to perform it has passed by, and then waste the remainder of our lives in unavailing regret."

"Mr. Ferguson, you say, encourages it?"

"Oh, yes! There is a long history of that man's connexion with my father, which you will probably some time become acquainted with. In one way or other they have been engaged in business together almost ever since you left this country. Nothing, however, has answered with them, until the new manufactory, which you must have seen in coming. Here so many hands are employed, and such mighty wonders done, that the poor people around us think we must be worth a world of wealth. But what would money avail us, if we had the wealth of Cræsus, and my poor father carried up every night, as you have just seen him. It is true, there are days, though few and far between, when he seems to make an effort to be his better-self again; and it was seeing him so well yesterday, and hearing that Mr. Ferguson was away, which induced me to ride over to your brother's this morning, with an invitation, which I believed you could not refuse; for I thought it possible, that by securing your company to-day, I might delay your knowledge of my father's actual state. No sooner did I see Mr. Fer-



guson, however, than I knew how the day would close ; for I always observe, that my father is least like himself, when that man is here."

Miss Somerville then added: "You are not one of those summer friends to whom I would apologise for your visit having been made so unpleasant. You remember, I doubt not, the happy meetings we used to have at this fireside ; and if the change is painful to you, what must it be to me ?"

"And is there nothing that can be done?" I asked.

"Nothing that I know of," she replied. "Night after night I sit by this solitary hearth, brooding over the same subject ; looking at it in every point of view, and asking in vain if nothing can be done. Perhaps," and she looked eagerly in my face, as if struck by some new and forcible idea : "perhaps if I could talk to my father about religion, it might do some good."

"Have you never tried it ?"

"Ah ! no. I am miserably dark myself. Our good pastor used to warn me, that the time would come, when I should need to realize the hopes I was so fond of specula-

ting upon ; but since he left us, no one has ever talked with me on this subject, and by degrees I seem to have lost the little hold of it I once possessed. Can you not help me here ?”

I was silent ; and we two friends—friends not only in name, but friends who would each have done and suffered much to save the other from a moment’s pain, sat together alone, after seven years of separation—one having known much of the painful experience of sickness, and the other of sorrow ; and each met the inquiring glance of the other, with the total blank of fatal ignorance on that one subject, which it was becoming daily and hourly more important for us both to understand.

Oh, who shall dare to call himself by the sacred name of friend, unless he can answer such an appeal as was made to me that night, by the woman I had left so gay and happy—the woman, whom I found on my return bowed down with anxiety and grief—forced even to the verge of premature old age, so much had sorrow worn away the bloom and the vivacity of her youth.

Yet by this sacred name, I scrupled not

to call myself; and such had been the effect of affliction on the mind of Miss Somerville, that she seemed, from the very weakness of her unsupported nature, to derive more satisfaction than in former years, from the idea that I really was her friend. In this manner, our acquaintance was renewed, with only one point of difference in our intimacy, which, on my part at least, was more felt than understood.

I had been accustomed, in bygone days, to regard Miss Somerville as something of a coquette; for she had a habit of perpetually leading one's attention to herself, and would rather provoke anger or reproof, than submit to be unnoticed. Thus she had been a little too fond of placing her peculiarities in a conspicuous point of view, as well as of piquing the vanity and wounding the self-love of those who formed her little court, in order that she might enjoy an opportunity of flattering them more effectually by her attentions, and soothing them by her yet more irresistible kindness.

All this, however, had now vanished as completely as if she had never known what it was to be admired. She now seldom

spoke of herself, and, even when conversing with me, would always change the conversation as soon as my observations referred to her own character and situation. This I regretted the more, as I found that her feelings, in their subdued and altered tone, her affectionate solicitude for her father, and the difficult and isolated position she held, as the only child of such a parent, were all combining to render her an object of deeper interest to me, than she had ever been before; though the apparent coldness of her manner effectually repelled me whenever I attempted to give utterance to such feelings.

The time was now approaching for me to decide upon whether I should return to India; and as long illness had exercised considerable influence over my habits, by damping the ardor of youthful enterprise, I will not deny that certain calculations upon the fortune of Miss Somerville, did occasionally mingle themselves with my admiration of her character. The possession of such a fortune would enable me with prudence to resign my commission. If, therefore, Miss Somerville would not allow me to introduce the subject in the customary

manner, it became necessary to the arrangement of my plans, that I should adopt some other method of bringing the question to a final decision. It was doubly painful to me to have no other alternative, because I knew that her fortune and her position in society had rendered a mere proposal of marriage a circumstance of such common occurrence in her experience, as to be despatched in the most summary manner; yet I trusted to her good sense and generosity for pardoning in me, what she had left me no means to avoid.

Nothing could be more embarrassing to me, however, than the perfect silence with which my proposal was at last received. I could see that she was affected by it—perhaps too much affected for words; but in what manner I was at a loss to comprehend; and I had nothing left but to implore her to answer a question on which depended my happiness here, and perhaps hereafter.

“Then I will treat you with a frankness equal to your own,” said she, “and briefly answer—No! Whether my answer is dictated by duty or inclination, can be of little consequence to you to know. It is as irrev-

ocable as if you were to me the least attractive being upon earth."

There remained little more for me to say, for there was a firmness in the tone and manner of Miss Somerville, which left no doubt as to the strength of her determination. We were therefore pursuing our walk in silence, when I perceived with surprise, that while she often turned away her head, as if to look at the plants by the way, or the prospect we were leaving, tears were absolutely streaming from her eyes, so fast, that it was no longer possible to conceal them from my observation.

Encouraged by this evidence of emotion, whatever might be its secret cause, I very naturally resumed the subject of our conversation, to which, however, she only replied with more firmness and decision.

"Do not," said she, "I entreat you, do not mention this subject to me again. The convictions which have already dictated my reply, are not to be set aside by persuasion. One thing, however, I would ask of you, and I ask it in all humility — do not take my answer unkindly — do not let it separate us as friends. I have been endeavoring, by the

most scrupulous behavior, to convince you, that I could be nothing more to you, nor you to me; and I am pained to the heart that you have not better understood me. You understand me now; and I repeat again — do not let this foolish business separate us as friends. I have no brother — I might almost say I have no father now. Do not utterly forsake me in my desolation.”

I told her then, for the first time, that I was about to return to India.

She started; but immediately went on — “Let us be like fellow-travellers then, who know that at the next stage they must separate for ever. Let us part kindly, for the dream of our friendship will indeed have passed, when you leave your native land again.”

Of all the different kinds of romance which take possession of the female mind, there is none more unintelligible to man, and few more unacceptable, than that friendship which she sometimes proposes to him in the place of love. Had I better understood the character and situation of Kate Somerville, I should have known, in her case at least, that she both offered it herself, and needed it from

me, in no ordinary or trifling degree, and that the kindness she asked of me in this melancholy and humble manner, she had richly earned the right to demand, by the noble sacrifice she was making, as she believed, in my favor.

It may easily be supposed, that after this interview I became a less frequent visiter at the Hall; for I had never, even when a youth, been sufficiently poetical to understand the luxury of cherishing a hopeless attachment. I consequently busied myself with preparations for my return to India, and thought as little of my disappointment as I could.

Kate Somerville, I observed, whenever we met, was much altered. She attempted to be lively, but her forced spirits failed her more than ever; and it was not difficult to perceive that some mental, or rather spiritual conflict was absorbing every thought. My sister often wished that she had some experienced adviser with whom she might converse confidentially; but, happily for her, she had already begun to feel that there is a consolation beyond what human love can offer — a friend whose counsels are more salutary than those of any earthly adviser.



Unacquainted with the exercise of a mind thus engaged, and unable to sympathize in its deep experience, I became gradually estranged from the society of my sister's friend. An indescribable feeling that our destiny was tending different ways, seemed to keep me at a distance from her, though whenever we met, there was an humble and a chastened expression in her features which made my heart ache to think what she was suffering, or had suffered. At times I wished to escape from the pain of seeing her thus altered; and then again, I wished more earnestly that I might stay, and be ever near her, if by this means it would be possible for me to partake of that influence which I could not but be sensible was purifying and elevating her character.

It is often observed, that before the hour of final dissolution, the appearance of the human sufferer undergoes a striking, and almost supernatural change, as if preparatory to that great event. And is it not often, to a certain extent, the same, before some of those fearful trials which mark the most important epochs of human existence? And merciful it is in the dispensations of Providence, that

so few are wholly taken by surprise. Surprise, indeed, we may feel as to the nature of the trial which awaits us ; but do we not often find, on looking back from such events, that there was previously a kind of awe surrounding us—a gloom—a gathering like that which comes before a storm ; or a silence still more deeply felt—a suspension of our ordinary being—as if to give us time to call up from long-neglected sources, the support which our suffering and feeble nature was about to require ?

## CHAPTER IV.

THE time of my departure for India was still unfixed, and we were all watching one evening with some anxiety the return of the messenger who brought our letters from the nearest town, when a servant from Somerville Hall galloped up to the door, and throwing the bridle over the neck of his horse, walked straight into the hall with a note for my brother.

Mr. Langton tore open the note, and, having glanced over the first line, turned quickly to the servant, when they both walked out upon the lawn in front of the house. In a few moments I saw my brother's servant leading out his master's horse already saddled.

"He surely will not go," said Lucy, "without telling us what is the matter." And at the same instant he entered the room.

"I am going to ride over to the Hall," said my brother, in a tone of assumed composure. "Mr. Somerville has been taken

suddenly ill, and I must not delay. You, Arthur, can ride after me, and bring back the tidings to Lucy, in case I should be detained."

I did so accordingly, and reached the entrance of the avenue as soon as my brother. We rode to the door in silence. Here we encountered the old housekeeper wringing her hands, and telling us everything but what we wished to know.

"And Miss Somerville?"—I asked.

"My poor young mistress," said the woman, giving way to a fresh burst of grief, "sits beside him like the ghost of what she was. She neither speaks, nor sheds a tear. The doctor says she must be got away; but she won't listen to any of us, sir."

And there, indeed, she was, too truly like the ghost of what she had been—immoveable, and pale as marble; while, stretched upon his bed, lay the senseless form of her father, whose fixed and death-like countenance she was watching with an earnestness which rendered her blind to every other object.

"He is not gone yet," she whispered, as soon as my brother had spoken to her. And

again applying her fingers to his pulse, she repeated, "He is not gone yet."

My brother would have gently led her away ; but she resisted his endeavors with an expression of countenance which at once forbade all farther interference. It was not a time or a place to apply to her for information ; and all I could gather from the domestics was, that Mr. Somerville had that day appeared to be in his usual health : that after dinner, he and his daughter had been for some time in the library together, when they heard a frightful shriek, and hastening into the room, beheld their master leaning back in his chair, his countenance slightly distorted, and his whole appearance bearing every mark of approaching death. Medical assistance had been immediately obtained ; and, though the circumstances of the case afforded little ground for hope, a hint had been thrown out, that, if in a few hours the vital spark should not become extinct, a favorable change might probably take place.

In such a situation, Miss Somerville could not be deserted by her friends ; and my brother, with his accustomed kindness, remained at the Hall, while I returned to in-

form my sister, as far as I was able, of all which had occurred.

On the following morning I was early on my way to Somerville Hall ; and musing, as I went, upon the many circumstances under which I had traced that path, I happened to turn my attention toward the large building called by the country people "Ferguson's Factory." At the same moment I was struck with the fact, that it was not as usual pouring forth its thick volume of smoke, to darken and pollute the air. My attention was afterward attracted by groups of work-people in the village through which I passed, collected into little companies, and evidently talking over some momentous affair of general and individual interest.

Concluding it was the alarming illness of a common friend and benefactor, which very reasonably excited so universal a sensation, I passed on, without any inquiry, from one party to another, until stopped by an old woman whom I knew to have been a dependant upon the bounty of Miss Somerville, and who now eagerly inquired of me, if I thought they knew at the Hall what had happened.

"What do you mean?" said I. "They must know it—they know it too well."

"What! that he is off out of the country, and all the works stopped, and nobody left to pay?"

A new idea now flashed upon me. It was but too probable, and but too true. I hastened on to find my brother, and, desiring to speak with him alone, told him all I had heard and seen.

"Villain!" he exclaimed, as the whole truth by degrees presented itself. "We might have foreseen this: a child might have foreseen it. And yet none of us could step forward and rescue this old man from ruin."

A letter which Miss Somerville was able, in the course of a few days, to write to my sister, will throw further light on this subject. It began with a description of her own situation, in her father's chamber at midnight, where he slumbered still insensible to all that was transpiring around him.

"I owe it," said the writer, "to his memory if he dies, to his character if he lives, to vindicate him from the charge which many

will be too ready to bring against him—that of having been the victim of mere animal excitement. In the sight of God, I have no apology to offer; but, in that of man, it may surely be some extenuation of his fault, to say that he was goaded on to ruin by causes which he ceased at last to have sufficient moral power to resist.

“His connexion with Mr. Ferguson was, from its commencement, most disastrous. Sums of money seemed to escape from his possession, without his being aware of their amount, and every new scheme increased, instead of redeeming, his past losses. Beside which, he never was calculated for business. It harassed his mind, and destroyed his natural rest. He became irritable and apprehensive; while the false stimulus to which he had recourse, served to give him nerve for the moment, and even inspired him with energy for new enterprise; so that he became at such times a pliant and willing instrument in the hands of a man who needed my father’s credit and capital to prosecute his own schemes.

“It is difficult to understand how my father’s honorable feeling should have been



so far overcome by one who was altogether unworthy of his confidence, except that he always attached so much importance to ingenuity and enterprise, that they covered from his sight a multitude of sins. And as to my own influence, I had shown my deep-rooted dislike to this individual in a manner too decided and ill-judged for my father to attribute it to anything but prejudice. His ear was therefore closed against all I might have to say.

“In this manner his affairs went on, until they became almost too desperate for hope. One thing after another had failed: none prospered with him. But still he had credit, and, upon that, fresh schemes were undertaken; while his debts were increasing on every hand. By mere chance, I had myself become acquainted with these appalling facts, and you may be sure that I reasoned with him—that I pleaded and prayed he would make an honorable stand against the encroachments of fallacious hope, and, by giving up the remainder of his property, that he would leave us our integrity, at least, for the solace of old age. But, unfortunately for my cause, the

tempter was ever at hand, and my father was growing imbecile ; while his moral feeling was failing even faster than his bodily strength. I grew desperate at last, and threatened to expose our situation to the world, rather than we should go on deceiving every one around us, and many to their own loss. It was then, in an evil hour, they finally overcame me — my father, by his tears ; while they bound me by a solemn vow, never, without his sanction, to communicate to any human being the real state of his affairs.

“ You have often asked me why I did not marry. Here, then, you read the cause. I can, however, say with truth, that never have I been tempted but once to adopt this means of escape from the gathering storm which seemed threatening to overwhelm me. Once, I confess, I did, for a moment, allow myself to dream of the happiness of escaping to a foreign land, until the blast should have blown over. But, knowing that my reputed fortune was an object of consideration, I could not bear the idea that any man — especially the one who interested me most — should awake from his visions of

wealth, to find he had married a poor and portionless wife.

“The darkest page of my history is yet to come. May reason last me to the end ! I have not lived to my present age, and seen and felt what I have done, without having had many serious thoughts on the subject of religion ; more especially, since I have seen that in my father’s case, it was the only thing that could save him. Still I was dark — miserably dark on that subject myself ; yet, as everything earthly seemed to be receding from me, as one hold after another gave way, and friendship, all but yours, began to fail, I felt, more than ever in my life, an awful and imperative call, to look into my real position with regard to time and eternity.

“I will not attempt to describe to you the state of mind which followed. I saw but too clearly what I might have been to my poor father. I felt what I was ! Something, however, I imagined might yet be done. I carefully watched my opportunity — and, on that awful day, I had followed him into his study, for the purpose of appealing to his better feelings, and inducing him to render

justice to others, and thus, if possible, obtain peace for his own mind, to which he had long been a stranger. I cannot repeat to you my words. But, if ever I spoke reasonably — if ever I spoke forcibly in my whole life — it was on that solemn occasion. For some time my father made no reply. His silence filled my mind with the dread of having offended him beyond forgiveness. I burst into tears, for it is a bitter thing for a daughter to reprove a father whom she loves. He was not insensible to my anguish; and, raising his eyes, I saw that a flood of light, like sunshine over a landscape, was diffusing its benign influence over every feature of his face. It was the welcome of a father's love; and, as he opened his arms to receive me, I fell upon his bosom, too happy to be sensible of anything, but an unexpected thrill of gratitude and joy.

“‘My child,’ said he, in tones of the gentlest tenderness, ‘do with me what you will. From this hour we will begin a new life. You shall be to me my good angel. My affairs are in your hands. Render justice, if it be possible, to all.’

“I closed my eyes, and remaining still

folded in my father's arms, I silently offered thanks to the Father of mercies, for thus awakening us both to a new existence, which I solemnly resolved should be devoted to his service.

"While occupied with these reflections, I thought I felt my father's hold relax; and raising my head, I saw that his own was drooping, while his hand dropped lifeless by his side. I scarcely know what followed. My cries brought in the domestics. Medical assistance was happily at hand; and the next thing I recollect was, that your husband and your brother, with their wonted kindness, came to my aid. Mr. Langton will tell you all the arrangements we have made together; for I consider the words my father uttered a sufficient sanction for the measures I have thought it right to adopt.

"One of my chief objects in writing this, is to impress upon you, and yours, the importance of attending to the claims of duty before it is *too late*. You see the consequences of my delay. A few years earlier, it is possible my father might have recovered himself, before his mental and moral strength were gone—a few years earlier,

he might have retained his respectability before the world, and have lawfully enjoyed the comforts of our happy home — a few years earlier, he might have had sufficient energy to redeem the past, and to devote himself to the service of his God, and the good of his fellow-men. What is his situation now? The pulse of life still beats in his veins; but senseless and child-like, he remains perfectly unconscious of what has passed, or what is passing around him. And I, upon whom this burden of responsibility has so long rested, have been trifling months and years away, until at last, when the anguish of awakened feeling roused me into action, it was my just punishment to find it was *too late*. This awful sentence seems now to be written on the walls of my solitary chamber — on my pillow — on my brow; and will it not be inscribed upon my father's tomb? Oh, may he yet be permitted to experience, if but one hour of natural and collected thought — one hour of preparation for his final change — one hour of repentance for those errors which through the weakness, the unfaithfulness, and the neglect of his only child, may yet be made

the ground of his final sentence—the seal of his doom through all eternity.”

The last and the most earnest prayer of the afflicted daughter was not rejected. Her father lived to recover his powers of thought, though not of action—he lived to feel that she was indeed his good angel—the messenger of reproof, but also of correction. He lived to recover his understanding; but it was to find himself in an humble habitation, where a daughter's love had surrounded him with every comfort that was necessary for the remainder of his life. He lived to find that his hereditary home had passed into other hands, and that he was no longer the rightful owner of a noble mansion, and a wide domain. He lived to find that the man whom he had trusted with his confidence above all others, had wronged and deserted him. He lived to find, that while many friends had fallen away with his falling fortune, there were others whom adversity had bound more closely to his interests; and one, above all, who renounced together the indulgences and the follies of her youth, to live but for

his happiness, and his support; reserving only for the comfort of his old age that small portion of the wealth she had been expected to inherit, which had been her mother's dowry.

It is true, Kate Somerville was a strict, an unflinching monitress; for she had the sorrowful experience of the past to teach her, that though benevolence, and kindly feeling, and all the virtues which adorn the social fellowship of life, may be practised in a more than ordinary manner; yet, without religion, vice, even of the most repulsive nature, may creep in among them, and pollute the whole. Impressed with this conviction, she made her father the object of her constant care; and as a parent guards a helpless child, so she watched over him in his weakness, with a solicitude which the dark past invested with a kind of fearful tenderness; yet, at the same time with a trembling hope, which the brightening future finally confirmed.

Such, then, was the fate of Somerville Hall. For many generations it had belonged to the family of that name. It was a situation peculiarly calculated for all that we combine in our ideas of earthly happiness;



it was equally adapted for easy independence and rational enjoyment; and for being the centre of beneficial influence, of charity, and benevolence, to the surrounding neighborhood.

It becomes a serious question: "Are there not other homes thus passing away from the hands of those who have long retained possession of their wealth, their influence, and their enjoyments? Are there not other daughters who see the same growing evil spreading its dark shadow around their hereditary hearth, casting dishonor upon the hoary head of age, and poisoning, with its deadly roots, all the sweet springs of domestic happiness, and do they still draw back—do they still refuse to stretch forth a helping hand, in time to stop the encroachments of this insidious but fatal foe?"

# **THE RISING TIDE.**

**9**



## THE RISING TIDE.

**THE** stranger who visited the residence of Mrs. Falkland, on the western coast of England, could not fail to be struck with the picture of peace and comfort which her home presented. She was a widow lady; but her solitude was cheered by the society of a son and daughter, whose characters were now sufficiently matured to render them in all respects companions to their mother.

It was on one of the loveliest evenings of September, that Mrs. Falkland and her daughter, in company with an elderly gentleman, who had once been a friend of her husband's, sat upon a balcony which ran along the western part of her house, commanding the view of a wide expanse of ocean, and of the radiant sky, where the sun was just sinking below the horizon; while slanting rays of yellow light glanced over the shallow bay, where

the receding tide had left the sands so smooth and wet, that they reflected, as in a mirror, the shadows of some fishermen who were gathering up their baskets, and preparing to return to their homes in the village.

The residence of Mrs. Falkland was one of a number of little villas, or genteel cottages, with their ornamental gardens, scattered over the woody hills that sloped down to the beach, where a line of rocks, in some parts majestically high, and in others, accessible to the foot-passenger, formed a barrier against the waves, which, when the tide was high, dashed up among the many little bays and hollows of the shore.

The village to which the fishermen were returning, and which gave its name to many distant groups of houses, lay in a narrow dell, through which an impetuous little river forced its way along a bed of rocks into the sea ; and though the sands on either side the stream looked as safe and solid as the earth itself, they were said to be uncertain and dangerous to cross in the vicinity of this stream. Still it was a thing of such frequent occurrence for horses and travellers on foot

to pass that way, that no one thought much about the danger ; and especially as the road along the beach was so much nearer than any other from the village to the neighborhood market town. The chief difficulty arose from some of the rocks jutting so far out into the sea, that all passengers were obliged to pay attention to the state of the tide, or the probability was, that even while plenty of space remained within the bay, they might find themselves hemmed in at these points by the waves having reached the rocks.

The country people, however, knew these dangers well, and strangers were under less temptation to seek the nearest way to the town ; so that all the record of accidents on this spot, were a few stories of by-gone days, kept up by the fishermen and old women of the village.

"You must be happy in such a home as this," observed the gentleman, who looked with Mrs. Falkland and her daughter upon the scene above described.

"We are indeed happy," replied the daughter. "At least, we would not exchange our

home for a palace." And she went on expatiating upon the many enjoyments the scenery and neighborhood afforded; while her mother, observing that the air was growing cold, took the opportunity of withdrawing from the balcony.

"We who live in the midst of the noise and the tumult of cities," resumed the visiter, "may almost be allowed to envy you the repose of a life like this — so free from anxiety, so tranquil, and so calm."

"And yet," said Miss Falkland, "we have our cares."

"Impossible! Julia. What can they be?"

"As a friend of my father's, I need scarcely scruple to speak to you of anything connected with the happiness of our family. You know my brother?"

"Yes; and a finer youth I never saw, than George Falkland, when he was last in town."

"He is, indeed, the kindest of sons, the best of brothers. But even he may have his faults."

"The faults of youth — mere thoughtless follies. You must not make too much of

them. He will grow wiser with advancing years."

"I wish it may be so. But at present he seems so much fonder of gay company than of his quiet home, that my mother seldom knows a happy day. Not that he is addicted to any particular vice, at least that we know of; but wherever he goes, he has a habit of staying out late at night, which throws my mother into such a state of nervous anxiety, that her health is seriously injured; while he, on the other hand, is so annoyed by what he calls her unreasonable solicitude, that he will not deny himself a single hour of convivial enjoyment for the sake of her peace of mind. Now it is such troubles as these, common and trifling as they may appear to others, which destroy the comfort of our otherwise happy home; and it seems the more to be regretted, that they should exist where there is so much affection and good feeling on both sides, and nothing else to mar our happiness."

"Youth and age," replied the visiter, "are apt to differ on such points; and perhaps both are incapable of making sufficient al-



lowance for the feelings which operate with the other. Yet, so long as your brother visits only in respectable families, and does not attach himself to any companion of bad principles, I should feel great hope of his ultimate recovery from these errors."

"But there is the root of our anxiety," said Miss Falkland, with increased earnestness. "My brother, I am sorry to say, does attach himself, by a very close intimacy, to a young man of the worst principles—a Ralph Kennedy, the only son of a worthy old man in this village, whose gray hairs may truly be said to be brought down with sorrow to the grave, by this ungrateful son. It is reported of the old man, that he sits up night after night, working at his desk, in order to keep a situation for his son, which his own infirmities have long since rendered him unequal to. And yet this young man—this Ralph Kennedy, is so idle and unsteady, as to be wholly unfit to succeed his poor father in a place of trust."

Before the conversation had reached this point, the sun had sunk below the horizon, the sands instantaneously assumed a dark

gray hue ; and ere the harvest-moon, which the next hour rose, had shed her silver light over the woods and the fields sloping down to the tranquil bay, the tide had so far receded, that nothing could be seen of the ocean, but a long line of deep blue, stretching away into the distant west.

Miss Falkland prepared to lead her visiter into the house ; when, rising from his seat, he observed, for the first time, that a quiet-looking young girl, apparently about eighteen, and dressed in white, had been their companion on the balcony ; and with a sort of instinctive curiosity, he directed an inquiring look to Miss Falkland, which seemed to say, " Whom have we here ? "

" It is only my cousin, Grace Dalton," said Miss Falkland, understanding him perfectly.

Seeing the girl did not attempt to rise, the old gentleman still lingered. " Won't you catch cold, my dear ? " said he, with that familiar, but well-meant kindness with which old gentlemen are apt to address those who are between girls and women.

Grace Dalton rose, and thanked him re-

spectfully, but immediately resumed her seat; and the door was closed upon the lighted room, and she was left to her evening meditations, and forgotten. Indeed, it was very easy to forget Grace Dalton; she was so small and so still. She was an orphan, too, and very poor; but surely it is not possible, in such a kind world as ours professes to be, that these two facts should constitute any reason why persons are more easily forgotten. Oh no! It was because Grace Dalton, as we said before, was diminutive in her person, simple in her dress, timid, gentle, unobtrusive, and not remarkably pretty, that she was so often, and so easily forgotten; and though she was a poor relation, and always came last into the room, and looked so humble, that she might have almost claimed pity from a stranger, it frequently fell to her lot to find no room left for her at table. Whether intentionally, or by accident, the servants used to omit to place her chair; and when she did not actually appear, nobody remembered her existence sufficiently to calculate upon her coming.

Yet for all this, the humble and isolated orphan had her own little world of interest, in which she lived, perhaps, a life of deeper feeling, because it was so seldom shared with others. What was the reason why she sat out so late this evening, no one asked, nor would they, perhaps, have felt more curious, had they seen the tears that were fast falling from her eyes, as she bent over the balcony, with her forehead resting on her arm. Perhaps it was something in the conversation which had pained her, for she was strongly attached to her cousin George, and often ventured to take his part, even when he was most in fault. She could not be made to see the desperate nature of Ralph Kennedy's principles; at least, she never joined in what her cousin Julia said against him; and thus she fell a little into disgrace, both with the mother, and the daughter.

Leaving this solitary girl to her uninterrupted meditations, we turn to a different scene, which at the same hour was taking place; where, seated around a social board, a little company of choice spirits,

with George Falkland at their head, laughed away the last hours of daylight, and hailed the lamps that seemed to dance before them as brighter harbingers of a happier and more joyous night.

George Falkland had that day left his mother's house, in company with his friend, Ralph Kennedy, who was in great request at all the convivial meetings in the neighborhood, not only for his musical talents, but his unrivalled good spirits, and good humor, which, without exciting any deep interest, made him a welcome guest wherever he went. It is true, he seldom went away from these meetings in a state very creditable to himself—it is true, he made his own gratification the sole object for which he lived—it is true, he left an aged father to toil for his support, because he had too much of what is called spirit to devote himself to any kind of regular pursuit. Yet, notwithstanding all this, he managed to keep what is considered good society; and to maintain for himself the character of being a "good fellow"—"his own enemy," it was granted; but still he was accounted the

enemy of no one else, and the best companion in the world.

It may be supposed, that such a character would often be deficient in those means by which the appearance of a gentleman is supported, while Falkland being ever ready to supply this deficiency, they became inseparable friends; and perhaps did, in reality, like each other as well as such characters are capable of liking anything beyond themselves.

On the night described, they had stayed late, and the moon had risen high before either of them thought of returning home. At last, when Kennedy had sung his best song, Falkland rose from the table; for no one cared after that to hear an inferior voice.

"Come, come," said Falkland, laying his hand upon the shoulder of his friend, "it will take us a full hour to ride home, and we had better have the benefit of the moon over the sands; for I fancy neither you nor I see so steadily as we did this morning."

"Sands!" exclaimed half-a-dozen voices at once. "You won't go by the sands to-night."

“W o n’t I, though ?” said Kennedy, rising, and immediately joining his friend ; while both supported the dispute, until it ended in a bet, which appeared to render the enterprise of going by the sands, altogether much more attractive.

The two friends then mounted their horses, and set off merrily, taking the road which led immediately down to the beach. It was a beautiful night. A breeze had sprung up from the sea, and a few distant dark clouds came floating along with it toward the moon ; but still she rode high in the heavens, and her light was almost like that of day.

It was a beautiful night, and many were the lively jests with which the travellers amused themselves by the way ; for Kennedy, though scarcely able to keep his balance on the horse, had often, when in that situation, a spirit of drollery about him, more amusing than in his sober moments, to those who cared not from what source it came. All his odd movements, all the strange accidents which happened to him under such circumstances, he could turn to jest ; and the laughter and merriment with which they

now pursued their way toward the sands, startled from behind the shadow of a rock, an old fisherman, who was watching his nets.

They had passed him by with a slight good-night, when Falkland wheeled round his horse, and asked him how long it would be before the tide would be up, and if they had time enough to reach the second headland which jutted out into the sands.

"Time enough," said the old man, "if your horses are good. The tide won't be up to the crags yonder, for half an hour yet." And he pointed to a heap of black rock, at some distance out to sea.

The travellers now set spurs to their horses, not so much from any fear of the tide, as from the mere hilarity of their own spirits, which could not be satisfied with any sober pace. Capable, however, as Kennedy had been of keeping his seat under more favorable circumstances, he fell from his horse the moment it struck into a gallop; and whether from the violence of the fall, or the novel position in which he found himself, he became so bewildered and confused,



as to be long before he could regain his seat. Even then he rode with his head sometimes bent over the neck of the horse, and sometimes thrown back, while the loss of his hat, and other accidents, occasioned both laughter and delay. To increase their difficulties, a dark cloud now spread over the moon, so that they lost sight for a time of the high land, which, terminating in a rocky ridge, stretched far into the bay, and formed a point, which they must pass before they could even reach the stream where the passage was accounted most dangerous.

Still their horses were safe, and well accustomed to the road; and as danger was the last thing that either of them would have dreamed of at that moment, they only rode more leisurely, altogether unconscious of the time they had lost by the way.

"I wish that cloud would pass," said Falkland, at last. "I cannot see the crags at the point, whatever I would do. And there is a kind of rushing in my ears, as if the tide was coming up; but that is impossible, for the old man said it would be more than half an hour before it reached the crags, and they are a mile off at least."

The cloud did pass ; and,—was it the moonlight that lay so white before them on the sand ? No : it was the tide running up in long sheets of hissing foam, each one stealing farther than the last.

“Set spurs to your horse,” cried Falkland, “and ride, Kennedy, ride, for your life !”

He did so, and down he fell again upon the sand ; and the foam curled up and around him, and then retreated, while he mounted again to make another fruitless attempt at greater speed.

“We shall escape yet,” said Falkland. “We are just upon the crags, and when these are passed, we have but the river, and all will be over.”

The crags were now their most immediate danger, for slippery as they always were with the seaweed, the surf was by this time dashing up among them, so that no horse could make sure of its footing ; and here Kennedy fell again, and again it was so long before he could be replaced in his seat, that Falkland, on looking round to the next point, which it was necessary to gain in order to reach the village, saw that the whole extent

of the little bay was one sheet of foam. Still it was not deep except in the bed of the stream, and their horses were untired ; so that if Kennedy could but keep his seat, all might yet be well.

It was in vain, however, that Falkland rode close beside his friend, and stretched out his arm to keep him steady. He appeared to have become more and more confused with each repeated fall, while the unequal nature of the ground rendered it impossible for their horses to find safe footing, or to keep pace with each other. Falkland himself was but just able to think, and to wish that they had taken the route above the cliffs. He even stopped, and looked for a moment toward the land, to see if there was no place where it was possible to ascend, but in vain ; and the next moment they plunged into the stony bed of the stream, and found themselves in deep water.

Kennedy had now fallen forward on his horse. The animal grew terrified, and, rushing desperately among the rocks and the foaming current, it shook itself loose from its rider, and then plunged forward, and left him to struggle for his life.

Falkland had now but one object—to place the wretched man behind him, and trust to his own animal for sustaining both. For this purpose he stretched out his arm, and caught the hand of his friend, at the moment when he was rolling down the stream. He even succeeded so far as to lift him upon his horse, but all his strength was unequal to keep him there. He had become utterly helpless, and it now seemed as if, in attempting to save him, both must perish. Still, however, Falkland resumed the attempt. He even succeeded again, and was only defeated by Kennedy falling this time with his hand clenching the coat of his friend, with a wild and desperate hold, which it was impossible to shake off.

“My mother!” cried Falkland, as if the fierce waves could hear him. “My poor mother! She will never survive this night, if I am lost. It is yet in my power to save her from a broken heart.”

With that he tore off the fragment of his dress, which that doomed and drowning man still held by, and, with one plunge of his horse, escaped out of the bed of the swollen torrent.

In the meantime, the lights were one after another extinguished in Mrs. Falkland's cottage; but the mother slept not, though she had retired at midnight to her own chamber. She slept not, for her nights were now but too frequently occupied in thinking to what the habits of her son would lead. She slept not, for memory was busy with his childhood, with the time when, as a sickly and fretful infant, he had demanded all her tenderness, and all her care. She thought of the sleepless hours, when she used to rock him on her bosom; how her time, her peace, her health, had been sacrificed, without a murmur, for his sake; and now, when she looked for her reward, when her own feeble strength required that rest she could not find, he could not — he would not — deny himself a single hour of senseless mirth, to calm the anxiety that was wasting her life away.

The window of Mrs. Falkland's chamber looked upon the garden, that of Grace Dalton toward the yard, where it was impossible that a horse should enter, without her hearing it. What, then, was her surprise to hear the well-known signal of her cousin, without

any previous notice of his coming! With a stealthy step, she trod as usual past the door of her aunt's chamber, and descended to the hall, where, drawing aside the bolt of the outer door, she stood expecting that her cousin would enter.

"I want to speak with you, Grace," said he, in a voice so little like his own that she started back. "Come away from the door, for no one must hear us talking. Come farther still, and be very, very quiet, while I tell you a sad story."

"Go on," said Grace, trembling all over. "I am quiet. Has anything happened?"

"Come out farther still," said her cousin; "and now be sure you do not exclaim, or make the least noise." He then whispered close to her ear, "Kennedy is lost!"

A shriek so loud that it seemed to ring through the vault of heaven, was the answer of poor Grace.

"There, now!" said he, grasping her arm, and speaking more angrily to her than he had ever done before. "You have done the very thing against which I warned you. I would rather have given you a thousand

pounds than you should have uttered that scream."

Lights were now glancing in all the windows of the cottage, and before many minutes had passed, Falkland was compelled to describe to the whole assembled household, every particular of the sad catastrophe. Even then, so great was the sensation it naturally excited, that scarcely could the presence of his living form convince them of his own safety. It was not difficult to read in his pale and haggard countenance the terrible conflict he had sustained; and while one brought him cordials, and another chafed his cold hands, Grace Dalton, who had wont to be the first to render all these offices of kindness, was the only one to stand aloof, as if altogether stupified by what had passed.

"Why do you stand there, child?" said Mrs. Falkland in her anxiety for her son. "Go up stairs, Grace, and bring dry clothes for your cousin."

The poor girl went up stairs as she had been told, but what it was to fetch, she could not by any possibility remember. Her delay was the cause of much chiding,

which seemed to produce no effect upon her senses. As regarded all present things they were quite gone, until Falkland called her to him, and whispered to her with a shudder on his lips, "Take that coat, Grace, and hide it, so that I may never see it more. The part that is torn away is where he held me with his dying grasp."

Grace Dalton took the coat as she had been requested, and no one knew how she disposed of it, for it was never seen again.

"And now," said Falkland, when his strength had been in some measure restored, "I have a hard duty to perform. I must go to old Kennedy, and tell him what has happened."

With this intention, he rose up, and even went as far as the door, when, turning back again, he sank down into a chair, exclaiming, "I cannot meet that old man! My heart fails me when I think that Ralph was the only relation he had in the world—the only being he ever seemed to love. Will none of you go with me?"

"I will go with you," said Grace.

"You, child!" was the general exclaima-



tion. But finding that, although little could be hoped from her assistance, she was in reality more willing than any of the party, it was at last agreed that she should accompany her cousin, though not without many earnest charges from him, that she would neither shriek, nor faint, nor trouble him with any of her childish imprudence.

"No, dear George," said she with such trembling meekness, that he could but cease to chide her — "I will be very, very quiet. You shall never have to find fault with me in this way again."

"Come then," said Falkland. "For once I will lean on your arm, instead of you on mine ; and, if you like, Grace, I will tell you as we go, all the particulars of this melancholy story, in order that when any one asks for them, you may be able to tell it yourself, and thus spare me the pain. Would you like to hear it ?"

"Yes ; only I am afraid I shall not be able to repeat it."

"Nonsense ! You should nerve yourself to these duties. If it is difficult to you, think what it must be to me, who have still

his death-grasp on my person ; his last moan in my ear ; his —— What ails you, Grace ? You are cold, child. The morning air is too sharp for you. Here, take this shawl, for they have given me more than I can bear ; and you have no bonnet. What a foolish girl you are !”

Grace made no reply : but her teeth absolutely chattered ; while the ghastliness of her countenance gave her cousin fresh cause to think that the gray dawn of morning, now spreading over earth and sea, was too cold in its autumnal chill for the delicate frame of his companion, and he drew her closer to his side, and held her hand in his, with a brotherly tenderness for her bodily comfort, which he had been less ready to feel for that of her mind.

“ There,” said Falkland, for he had already commenced his story, “ it was just in the direction of that stunted tree, half-way between the first point and the river, that Kennedy first fell from his horse. Look, Grace. Why, you are actually turning toward the land. Have you forgotten in which direction lies the sea ?”

"I am looking," said Grace. "At least, I will look if I can, but the wind blows so fiercely." And she shaded her eyes with her hand, while her cousin went on with his story.

Long before he had concluded the melancholy detail, which to a less interested auditor would have been sufficiently distressing, they found themselves before the humble home of Kennedy's father.

It was a second-rate sort of house; and the one domestic who waited upon the old man, was yet too soundly asleep to hear their summons, for they knocked in a trembling and hesitating manner. At last they heard a slow step in the passage. One bolt was drawn away, and then another, and then the door was opened by the old man himself, who stood before them with an inquiring gaze, while he held in one hand a lighted candle, which had burnt down into the socket.

Grace Dalton looked at her cousin. His lips moved—his voice faltered—he could not utter an articulate sound.

"Perhaps you will allow us to come in,"

said Grace; "we have come to speak with you on very important business."

"Business?" repeated the old man, as well he might, at that hour of the morning, and with such guests. He admitted them, however; and, throwing open the door of his little sitting-room, it was easy to see that he had known no rest that night, for his table was covered with papers and account-books; and everything wore the appearance of solitary and anxious toil—that toil of mind, and labor of calculation, for which old age is so unfitted. Without betraying any curiosity, he motioned for his guests to be seated, and resumed his own chair, waiting patiently for them to begin the conversation. .

They were both silent; while the quivering fingers of Grace Dalton played among her hair, and her open lips were pale as ashes. At last she spoke.

"I think, sir, you are aware where your son spent last evening."

"I know little of where he spends his evenings," replied the father, "and it has become a matter of small importance to me."

There was a real or assumed severity about old Kennedy, which drove most people away from him; and which might, possibly, have had its influence in estranging his son from the affections and the duties of home. But now this apparent coldness, while it shocked the feelings of Grace Dalton, gave her nerve to proceed, and she actually related the whole account of the fatal catastrophe, exactly as it had been told to her, only pausing occasionally to ascertain whether she ought or ought not to proceed.

"Go on," said old Kennedy, every time she stopped, in a deep-toned and sepulchral voice; but he never once looked up, nor changed his attitude, nor unclasped his hands, that were closely folded together, with his lips pressed upon them, and his elbows supported by the arms of his chair.

"Go on," he repeated, until the whole had been told; when he simply asked—"And the body?"

"I have stationed six fishermen from the village," said Falkland, "along the bay, and three beyond the crags; but they say it is impossible it should be found before the tide

goes down. I shall then be on the beach myself, and see that nothing is neglected. In the meantime, if you would like Grace Dalton to remain with you, she will be most happy to render you any assistance in her power."

"Who is Grace Dalton?"

"The young person who has accompanied me."

"I would much rather be alone; and, perhaps, the sooner you both leave me, the better."

There was no forcing their presence upon him after this remark; and the two cousins arose, and left the room, with that stealthy step with which we instinctively tread in the presence of affliction; the old man neither rising from his chair, nor offering them the common civilities of one who takes leave of departing guests.

They had not left the outer door, however, before their progress was arrested by the sound of deep groans from within. They paused; for it was not easy to leave an aged man, under such circumstances, alone. They paused; for pity, as well as horror, seemed to chain them to the spot; and now they discovered that those strange and awful

sounds were the strong prayer of mortal agony—that prayer which is wrung out from the human soul by its necessity, not by its inclination or its hope.

“He did love him, then!” exclaimed Grace Dalton; clasping her hands together; “He did love him as a father ought to love a son! May blessings fall upon the head of that old man!”

As she said this, a flood of tears gushed from her eyes; they were the first she had shed on this melancholy occasion: for grief, that is mixed with horror, seldom causes tears; while, add but to the bitter tide one drop of gratitude or joy, and tears immediately become the natural relief of the over-burdened heart.

“Why, Grace,” said Falkland, as he led his cousin away from the house of mourning, lest by again yielding to her own emotion, she should be the cause of interruption or alarm to others—“How is this? You are overwhelmed with gratitude, because a stern old man is melted into common feeling by the death of his son. For my part, I should have felt more pity for him had he

received the first intelligence more like a father, and a Christian man."

"We cannot all feel alike," said Grace, "nor make the same display of sorrow when we do feel it. I confess, like you, I was shocked at the seeming apathy with which our intelligence was at first received. But those fearful groans, George, they surely tell of more than common grief."

The gray dawn of the morning had by this time given place to the full light of day, though it was one of the darkest and the gloomiest of those which usher in the storms of winter. The stillness of the preceding night had occasionally been interrupted by a rushing wind, which now swelling into a strong gale, blew fiercely over earth and sea, sweeping across the bosom of the troubled ocean, and lashing the spray of the rising billows into one vast bed of foam. The tide was rolling out, but it retreated with an angry roar, as if unsatisfied with the work of destruction it had already accomplished.

All the distance from the village to the beach, was now scattered with groups of



people, who, some of them from mere curiosity, and some from feelings of deeper interest, had left their homes, to hear if there were any tidings of the body, or to learn if anything more remained to be told than the melancholy story which had already circulated from house to house, with the usual number of variations and additions. Among these groups was many a poor mother with her children clinging to her cloak, all looking anxiously toward the sea, and yet all afraid to behold the object of which they were in search. There were men blessing and comforting themselves that their sons were not as this prodigal, who would never more return to his father's house. There were young women who looked and looked again, and all the while kept close together, calling back to remembrance the kindness, the freedom, and the generous-heartedness of him who was lost; and there were old fishermen, telling of their own escapes, and wondering at, and settling, and unsettling again, the manner of the young man's death. And still the hoary deep rolled on, telling its dark secrets to none.

Falkland and his cousin approached the scene of interest from one point ; his mother and sister, with their household attendants, from another. Way was respectfully made for all, and they stood together for some time without uttering a word, except to ask and tell in what manner old Kennedy had borne the intelligence of his loss. All looked toward the sea ; and Grace Dalton, though she trembled violently, dashed away her hair from her eyes, and looked more intently than any of the watchers there.

" See, see," said Mrs. Falkland, " there is old Kennedy himself — and alone."

And there indeed he stood, the aged father, leaning on his staff, with his white hair floating in the wind. He stood alone too, except for a faithful dog, that never left his side. He stood alone, for he had held no fellowship with others in the common avocations and interests of life, and therefore it was the necessary consequence, that in his grief they should hold none with him. Yet there was something almost more than human nature could endure, to see a father alone on such an occasion, and Grace Dal-

ton left her aunt and cousins, and stealing quietly up to the ridge of high ground on which he had stationed himself, stooped down, and patted his dog, that she might at least be ready, if he should wish for any one to be near him.

Encouraged by having escaped a direct repulse, Grace ventured at last to stand nearer, and from a natural impulse upon which she acted almost unconsciously, she said, in so meek and quiet a voice, that it could not have offended any one, "Sir, will you not lean upon me, the wind is very strong?"

"Lean upon you, child?" said old Kennedy; "why should I lean upon you?"

And he turned half away from her, to look again at the sea without interruption.

Perhaps it was well that he had not accepted the offered aid of his young companion; for the next moment she was shooting like an arrow across the sands, straight on to a crag of black rock, which was just beginning to stand out above the shallow waves, and beside which some of the fishermen were now seen to be gathering themselves into a group.

"What can be the matter with Grace?" said Mrs. Falkland, observing the strange movements of her niece. "She seems to have quite lost her senses with this melancholy affair. You were wrong in taking her with you, George. She would have been much better at home. She has no spirits for such scenes as these."

"You are mistaken in Grace, I assure you," said Falkland. "She was of the greatest possible use to me this morning, and, really, behaved like a heroine. But see! They have found him: they have found him at last. I am sure that is the body."

It was true, as Falkland had said. The wretched man had not been washed by the waves to any great distance from the spot where he perished, probably owing to his dress having become entangled among the rocks; and there he lay, stretched out upon the sand, one of his cold hands still clenching, with an iron grasp, the shred of Falkland's coat, which he had torn off when they separated for the last time.

Nothing now remained to be done, for it

was impossible that a spark of life should remain ; and, while all stood around, uttering their different exclamations of regret, Grace Dalton remained on her knees beside him, stooping down with her head so low, that she could have heard the faintest breath had it passed his lips ; though her hair fell down and shaded her face, so that none could see in what manner she was holding her strange communion with the dead.

It seemed as if the girl had forgotten the natural timidity—her aunt said, the natural modesty—of her sex ; for, on first reaching the spot where the body had been dragged out and laid upon the smooth sand, she had torn open the vest of the drowned man, and laid her hand upon his heart, to feel if there was yet a throb, or a sense of human feeling, left. It was in vain. The fishermen smiled, with melancholy meaning in their looks, to see her fruitless efforts, and the foolish hopes which none but a dreamer like herself could have entertained for a moment. But still she knelt beside him, and not the ghastly countenance, from which other women turned away ; nor the crowds that gath-

ered round her, nor the spray of the sea-foam, nor the fierce wind that came with splashing rain, and drove half the idle concourse back to the village—had power to raise her from that lowly posture, until a bier was brought, and the body was placed upon it, and carried away before her eyes. Then she suddenly recollected herself, and, silently meeting the reproof of her aunt, she wrapped herself round with a shawl, and walked the last of all the party, as they returned to Mrs. Falkland's dwelling.

Our nearest relatives are sometimes the last to understand the real state of our feelings. The rude fishermen on the beach had seen at once, by the behavior of Grace Dalton, in what relation she had stood to the deceased; and they had regarded her affection with that respect which unsophisticated nature is not slow to render to real suffering. How little of this respect would have been shown by those in a higher sphere of life, who had undertaken the support and guardianship of the poor orphan—how little of this respect would they have shown, had they known that she had so far deviated

from the principles carefully instilled into her mind, as to dare to love a man whose life and conduct were like those of Ralph Kennedy.

And why had she loved him? Perhaps simply for these reasons—because he had been kinder than any other human being ever was to her; because she was lonely, and he had been her friend; because she was despised, and he had shown her respect; because she was an orphan, and he had promised to protect her.

It needs little philosophy to account for the origin of love. There are human beings who cannot exist, of and by themselves. Their very being is a relative one; and the more they are shut out from sympathy, and kindly fellowship, and the mutual interchange of thought and feeling with others—the fewer channels they find for the outpourings of natural affection—the stronger will the tide of that affection be when it does burst forth, uniting, as it were, in one living stream, all the pent-up and sealed fountains which lay beneath the sterile surface of their desert life.

Bitterly would Mrs. Falkland have reproached her niece, had she known why, among that crowd of strangers, she had stood the first — why she had approached the nearest to that awful spectacle — why she had been the only one to endeavor to unclench that cold hand — why she alone had hoped against hope, that there might still be life. Happily for poor Grace, the strangeness of her conduct met with no farther censure than its absence of decorum deserved, and this was even pardoned in consideration of the childish weakness with which she was so often charged; for, like most persons in her situation, she had often to bear the blame of a fault, and its direct opposite, at the same time.

No extenuation, however, ought to be offered for the chief fault of which Grace Dalton was guilty — that of loving a dissipated and unprincipled man. She felt that she deserved no pity, and therefore she asked for none. She had her punishment within herself; and the perpetual sense of condemnation which she bore about with her, made her still more meek, and humble, and



submissive under reproof, than she would otherwise have been. Nor did she regard the errors of Ralph Kennedy with more toleration, in her own mind, than the rest of the world evinced toward them. In proportion to the high estimate of what she believed to be his virtues, was her fear, her sorrow, her hatred of his vices. These, however, she never spoke of, except to himself. There were others to do that, she thought; and when so many voices were against him, there was the less need of hers.

Thus she was often thought to look with too lenient an eye, both upon his conduct, and that of her cousin George. The fact was, she loved her cousin because she believed that he loved Kennedy; and, had those who charged her with indifference to their vices, only followed her to the little chamber which she occupied alone — had they watched her there, when every other member of the household was wrapped in sleep, they might have seen such tears, and heard such prayers, as would have convinced them that vice in any form, but particularly in those she loved, was no matter of indifference to her.

There are strange contradictions in some of the popular modes of judging of human character — contradictions which, if they were to exist in religious society, would be laid hold of by the world, and exhibited to view, as proofs of the unsubstantial nature of all such profession. Among these, there is none more striking, and certainly none more injurious to the well-being of society, than the habit of attributing to young men of gay and dissipated habits, an excess of generosity, and an absence of selfishness, which are considered as outweighing all their moral delinquencies.

Whether this false estimate of character is derived from the glowing and attractive descriptions of some of the popular heroes of ancient, as well as modern romance; or whether it is merely that mankind can accommodate their judgment to circumstances, so as to admire what it suits their inclination to imitate, it is not our business now to inquire. But it may not be foreign to the subject in hand, to tax the patience of the reader for a few moments so far as to ask, in what does the generosity and the dis-

interestedness of the characters alluded to, consist? Is it in their kind and consistent regard to the feelings of those by whom they are most beloved, and whom they profess to love in return? Is it in their self-denial — in the privations they undergo for the sake of promoting the happiness of others? Is it in the full and efficient returns they render for all the care and anxiety of which they are the cause? Is it in the abundant bestowment of their pecuniary means, to support the destitute, and to solace the afflicted? Is it in the faithfulness and punctuality with which they hold themselves ready at the call of duty to answer the demands of friendship and affection? Is it in the sacredness with which they fulfil every trust committed to their charge? Is it, in short, in their absence of self-love, and their disregard of self-gratification, in comparison with the gratification of their friends?

If there be any meaning in the words generosity, and good-heartedness, they would surely comprehend some of these points; and yet in all these, are the characters of

the gay and the dissipated peculiarly deficient.

If we could, by any means of calculation, add together all the tears which such characters habitually and recklessly cause, all the hours of anxiety they inflict upon their near connexions, all the bickerings and disputes occasioned by their conduct between those who censure and those who defend them, all the wretched feeling they leave behind them whenever they go out, all the anguish which awaits their return, all the disappointment of those who trust them, and, finally, all the wretchedness attendant upon the full development of those vices, of which what the world calls gayety is the natural and certain germe — if we could add all these together, we should behold a sum of human misery greater than ever was produced by absolute crime — by murder, theft, or any of those gross and desperate acts, against which public indignation is so justly and unanimously raised. If we could add all these together, we should see, operating through different channels, a mass of selfishness, with which that of the solitary miser bears no comparison.

The life of the gay man is, in fact, a system of self-indulgence, of self-gratification, of self-worship. The miser, in his despised and isolated sphere, has no power to prey upon the happiness of society. The privations he imposes, extend no farther than himself; and, if no other individual shares in what he gains, he is alone in the punishment he inflicts. But the dissipated man has a wider influence, because he is the hero of society in its worst state. He has therefore the power to disseminate the seeds of evil in a degree proportioned to his popularity; and in the same measure as he is beloved, he is capable of inflicting misery. He knows that he can do this, and he does it still. He knows that he is the cause of floods of burning tears, and while he weighs them against one intoxicating draught, it is self-love that prompts him again to hold the sparkling poison to his lips, and to let the tears flow on.

But to return to our story. The father of Ralph Kennedy saw, from the point of land on which he stood, that three or four fishermen were gathered together on one particu-

lar part of the sand, and he knew from the number of persons who hastened toward the spot, that they had found the body of his lost son. It was not in his nature to connect himself with a crowd, especially on such an occasion. He therefore returned, silently and alone, to his own dwelling, where he gave the necessary directions to his only domestic, and then shut the door of his chamber, and listened for the footsteps of those who should bring home the dead. They were long in coming; and the servant had time to make ready a little parlor, considered more particularly as her master's own apartment, for it was here he used to keep his books, and here he used to sit through the midnight hours, waiting and watching for his son's return, it having been his custom never to allow any other person to be disturbed by his late hours.

While these preparations were going forward, Grace Dalton walked silently home with her aunt and cousins; when, on passing a cottage at the outskirts of the village, it suddenly occurred to her that help might be wanted in the house of mourning, and, step-

ping back a few paces, she entered the dwelling of a poor woman who was in the habit of attending on such occasions.

Like most persons in her situation of life, the woman began immediately to descant upon the character of the deceased adding her present testimony to her past forebodings, that it "would come to this." She always "knew it would come to this." With many wise and moral observations, which Grace considered rather ill-timed, and therefore reminded her that the unconscious object of her remarks was now dead, and that it became all who were left, to forget and forgive.

"As to forgiving," said the woman, "I don't know that there's much of that needed, unless it is the injury done to my poor boy, who has never been the same since that young man came to our house; for what with his jokes, and his songs, and his good-humored laugh, and"—

"He used to come here, did he?" asked Grace, with a sudden glow of color in her cheek, to which it had long been a stranger.

"Oh! yes, miss. He would sit here even-

ing after evening, when our Ann was at home ; and the poor girl takes on so. I am sure if he had been our equal, we could none of us have been more sorry ; for he never seemed above being one us, as I said before, when Ann was at home."

Poor Grace ! She thought she had suffered enough before ; and now this woman was unconsciously mixing drops of bitterness with the draught, which she had not yet begun to feel was one of healing. And thus it must ever be with those who associate themselves in their affections with what is contrary to the nature of virtue and religion. It is not vice alone which, under such circumstances, must appal them ; vulgarity must also repel, for there is no refinement — let poets and romances say what they will — there is no true refinement in a vicious life.

Grace Dalton, though simple in the extreme, was yet high-minded where her sense of delicacy was concerned ; and when the daughter of this poor woman returned from the beach, sobbing, and making as much display as possible of her grief, Grace felt too much offended to permit her to remain an-



other moment in the house. She was even going without having fully discharged her errand, but suddenly recollecting her own words — “he is dead now, those who are left ought to forget and forgive,” — she turned back, and requested the woman to make haste to the house of Mr. Kennedy, to offer her services there, and by no means to linger if they should not be accepted.

Notwithstanding the dreadful calamity which had so recently taken place, it did not so nearly touch the family of Mrs. Falkland, but that all was peace that day within her dwelling. Falkland, wearied out with excitement, had retired to rest; and by the time their evening meal was prepared, he was able to join his mother and sister once more around the social board.

The fierce gale of the morning had then died away; and when the moon rose, and shed her silvery light over the rough promontories that stretched away toward the sea, George Falkland and his mother sat again on the rose-covered balcony, their hands clasped together in that expressive silence, which conveys more meaning to the heart

than the most eloquent words. His sister, too, was there, and Grace Dalton; and all looked toward the sea except Grace, who seemed to be teaching the clematis where it ought to climb, though her small hands trembled so that she could scarcely guide its fragile twigs.

Never are the beloved of the family circle so dear as when recently escaped from danger; and Mrs. Falkland and her daughter looked with affectionate interest at the noble youth who held a hand of each, and then at the wide sea, whose ruffled waves could still be heard retreating in the distance, and their hearts yearned over him as over a treasure newly found, or just redeemed from lost.

The subject of their separate thoughts was the same — the awful night that was past; when, another wave of that angry flood, another cloud over that clear moon, a moment less of time, and that vigorous form, so rich in all the gifts of nature, so animate with life, and adorned with youthful beauty, might have been stretched upon the silent bier in a house of mourning and desolation.

"I cannot tell," said Falkland, as if think-

ing aloud, "how it was that that poor fellow so entirely lost his presence of mind. He had no more power to help himself, than a child would have had under such circumstances. And yet to see the mirth of his merry face not half an hour before, when we rode down to the beach, and the cliffs echoed with our laughter. When I think of this, and the last look of agony I caught as he fell back in the water, his clenched hand still holding that shred of my dress—Oh, mother! it makes me wish to hide myself in the earth, or in some place where this horrible vision never could pursue me."

"He was so unprepared, too," said Mrs. Falkland, "and such a character!"

"There are many persons," said Grace, "who die in their own chambers, and with all the warning of long illness, as unprepared as he was."

"Ah, Grace," said Julia Falkland, "will you never see these things as you ought to see them?"

"When young women like you," observed the mother, "who have been virtuously brought up—when such make excuses for the vices of men, what can we expect?"

"Shall I bring your shawl, dear aunt?" asked Grace. "The evening air grows cold."

"Perhaps we had better all retire," said Mrs. Falkland.

"No, no," said George, detaining both his mother and his sister. "And you, too, my poor little Grace. You shall no longer stand shivering there. Come sit down near to Julia; for I want you all to witness this night, that I discharge my conscience of a load, so far as it can be discharged by an act which refers merely to the future. Would to Heaven it could expiate the past!

"I now want you all to hear me, and to bear witness to my vow, while I look to yon dark sea with the same clear moon—the same blue skies above me—I want you all to bear witness to my vow, when I promise, that, as God will give me strength, from this time henceforward, I never more will grieve my poor mother's heart as I have done—I never will stain my own character, nor suffer the moral degradation which man must suffer under the mastery of wine, and in the fellowship of those whose only enjoyment

is the excitement for the moment, purchased by the sacrifice of domestic peace. Now, this is my vow. My mother, my Julia, my poor Grace, you must all help me to keep it."

A solemn silence followed. The mother's hands were for a moment clasped together in the attitude of thanksgiving, until her feelings burst all bounds, and she actually sobbed aloud. Julia leaned her head upon her brother's shoulder, while her tears fell thick and fast upon his bosom. Grace alone was silent, and wept not like the rest.

They were a happy little party who sat beside Mrs. Falkland's cheerful fire that evening, for they were happy in that peaceful solemn feeling, which, beyond all others, deserves the name of happiness. They were happy in knowing that evil was renounced, and good, at least intended—happy in confidence restored, in affection valued, in trust held sacred, and in peace regained. If Grace Dalton looked less cheerful than the rest, it was only that she had a different way of showing her satisfaction; for none were more thankful than she was for the

resolution her cousin had made. Nor was he unconscious of her meaning, when she held his hand at parting for the night, and looked up into his face, and bid him such a kind good-night, as spoke the true language of affectionate regard. But there were also other proofs of her sympathy with his state of mind, with which none were acquainted.

It was her custom at all times to visit his chamber, as well as her aunt's and Julia's, before the hour of retiring to rest, to see that all things were ready for the night, and all their comforts separately and regularly provided for; though she never, on any occasion, neglected those of her cousin George, and would have done just as much for him when she knew he was transgressing the rules of propriety and decorum, as she did at other times; yet on this night she had taken a bible—a book she feared he too much neglected—and placed it on his dressing-table, in order that he might, if so disposed, strengthen his recent resolution, by studying its sacred and consolatory pages. George Falkland saw the strange volume,

and supposed it had been his mother or his sister who had placed it there.

And now the hour of escape from observation arrived for poor Grace—the hour she was in the habit of calculating upon many times during the long day—the hour when she could shut the door of her chamber, and feel that she was alone—the hour when, if she could do nothing to serve the secretly-beloved, she could at least pray for him. Bewildered with the confusion of images, which through this day had flitted before her; worn to a state of weariness, which left her no power to rest; distracted with the part she had been acting, sometimes false, and sometimes too sorrowfully true—she had a vague feeling, that, by flying to her own room, and casting herself upon her knees, she should be able, as on other weary nights, to throw off some of the burden of her soul. What then was the agony of her mind, when, after assuming this attitude, the thought suddenly flashed across her brain, that she had no longer any one to pray for—that *his* doom was now sealed for ever—that neither tears nor

supplications could now be availing for *him*.

How little do they understand of true loveliness, who have never known this state! Grace arose from the ground appalled with a fresh sense of her situation; and wringing her hands with a burst of uncontrollable agony, would at that moment have freely suffered every torture that human nature is capable of sustaining, to have called him back but for one hour of repentance.

It was not long, however, before this bitter agony gave place to feelings of a softer nature; and recollecting the solemn event which had that evening bound together, as by fresh ties, the family with whom she was so intimately connected, she knelt down again, and prayed for her aunt, who had always been to her as a mother, for her cousins, but most of all for George, that he might be enabled to maintain his purpose; and then she turned to the solitary father in his lonely home: and so, after a long time, she rose up comforted, and, walking to her window, which commanded a view of the village, she looked out, and saw that



a dim light was still burning in the old man's window.

"How could I be so wicked?" said she  
"There is always some one left to pray for ;  
and, perhaps, this old man has no interest  
in any other prayers than mine."

The following morning Grace Dalton was able to put in practice a plan she had formed for visiting the father of the deceased, without appearing designedly to obtrude herself upon his notice ; and in this she obtained the full approbation of her aunt, who was extremely anxious to adopt some mode of expressing her sympathy with the bereaved parent. He was, however, so little known to any one, so reserved and inaccessible in his own character, that this was an object of no easy attainment ; and had not Grace been a more than commonly willing messenger, and so meek, besides, as not to shrink from the probability of meeting with a repulse, Mrs. Falkland's intended kindness would never have been carried into effect.

There were many considerations now to be entered into with regard to the funeral, in which female aid was not altogether out

of place ; and Grace began, by consulting with the servant, and occasionally sending messages to the master, which he answered promptly, and without evincing anything like displeasure, but rather as if relieved from a burden, by others having taken this affair upon themselves. Grace had imagined it would be so, for she possessed that kind of intuitive insight into character, which a naturally strong power of sympathy affords, and which is, perhaps, more serviceable, in the common events of life, than talents of a higher and more distinguished order.

Thus, before the day of the funeral arrived, Grace Dalton had become a sort of authorized assistant in the melancholy preparations ; and retiring and modest as was her general bearing, her aunt and cousins were surprised to find the tact and skill with which she contrived to manage these affairs, without appearing to manage them at all. Mrs. Falkland and her daughter had both made the same experiment, and had both failed. They were too much of fine ladies to suit the taste of such a man as Kennedy ;

and, besides, they were now too happy to sympathize with him in reality, though they spoke fluently and well in the language of condolence. Grace, on the contrary, seldom uttered an expression which could lead the reserved and solitary man to think that he himself was the subject of her observations. He only noticed that she took a part in the preparations for the funeral ; and he thought it was quite right for those who had a taste for such things, to take them into their own hands.

And now the morning of that day had come, and all things were in readiness ; and Grace Dalton felt that her melancholy task was done ; for what right had she to take part in the mourning ? what right had she even to be seen to weep ? for what were the Kennedys to her ?

While she was occupied, while she trod with gentle step about the house, and felt that she had an errand or duty there, she was comparatively happy. She could even pass the door of that silent room, though she had done this as seldom as possible ; but now that all was ready, that the grave

claimed its own, and the sacred charge must be resigned, she felt a strange sinking of the soul, a sense of forlornness in her unpitied grief, under which her spirit failed ; and having occasion to follow the servant into the room where the father sat alone beside the closed coffin, she lingered there a moment, to see if she might not be permitted, though silently, to mingle her sorrow with his.

“Is all ready, child ?” said the old man, in a voice at once so gentle and subdued, that Grace was encouraged to approach nearer ; and after answering his question, she bent her head upon the coffin, and gave way to her tears.

It was the hour of final separation. Both felt it to be so ; and the old man sat at the head of the coffin, his hands clasped together, as if their firmly-knit grasp gave him strength to bear his affliction ; while the gentler form of the orphan-girl was bowed as if with mortal anguish. And there she wept, as if her heart was breaking ; and the father was too deeply wrapped in thought to ask what right she had to grieve. Sad and solemn were the

moments which the two mourners thus spent together. They were too soon interrupted ; and old Kennedy rose from his chair to meet the strangers who came to perform their appointed office. He rose from his chair, and motioned for them to proceed with their duty ; but his knees shook beneath him, and he dashed his hand across his brow as if to clear his vision, or to sweep away some image that still lingered before his sight. He soon recovered himself, however, and with no arm to lean upon, no near relative to wear so much as the outward garb of wo, he walked after the coffin to the place of burial, and stood with his head uncovered during the solemn service beside the last home of his only child.

There were many there who pitied the lonely father ; many who would willingly have followed him to his desolate home, and shown him the common sympathy of neighbors and friends ; but his manner drew no one near him, and he had failed, either intentionally or inadvertently, to request that any invitations should be given to his house. He therefore returned from the grave as he

had gone — alone ; and walking directly to his own door, entered his chamber without exchanging a single word with any individual. Even Grace had now no plea for remaining ; and he passed her so hastily when by chance they met, that she could not but understand his wish to be left entirely alone.

The next day, however, she found, or made, an excuse for calling at the house ; and not having been able to accomplish this before the evening, she was agreeably surprised to find that her appearance had not only been expected, but wished for.

“I thought you long in coming,” said old Kennedy, perhaps unconscious himself how much he was the creature of habit, and how the quiet step, and gentle voice, and willing hand of Grace Dalton, had in reality won upon his heart.

Simple as were these few words, they had a powerful effect upon the orphan-girl, who felt that a way was now opened for the kindness she had found it so difficult to express.

Nor did she, as many would have done, defeat her own purpose by expressing too much. She even went away that evening

at an early hour, and evidently before the old man was expecting to hear her kind good-night.

The next morning Grace was the bearer of a present from her aunt; and so she went on, stealing upon the heart of the solitary, until he began to converse with her perhaps more freely than he had done with any one for many years of his life. Grace had observed, that for some time he had been busily arranging his books and papers; she had observed also, that he was always at home; and she was not surprised to learn that he had resigned the situation, which, but for the sake of his son, he would never have held so long.

"My wants will now be so few," said he, "that it would ill repay me to be spending the little time that is left me on this side the grave, in toiling for myself."

Yet how to pass the time when no longer stimulated to exertion, was to him a far greater difficulty than he had apprehended; and, like many others similarly circumstanced, the lengthened hours of his aimless existence were often filled with murmuring

and discontent. Even common kindness, from whatever hand it came, with the exception of that of Grace Dalton, was scarcely received with gratitude.

"I cannot tell," said he to Grace one day, "why Mrs. Falkland thinks I have more relish for dainties since the death of my son, than I had before. She never sent me these delicacies when he was living, and might have shared them with me."

"It is the only means she has of showing you her kind feeling," observed Grace.

"And why does she wish to show it? Is it not enough to feel kindly, without telling others that you do so?"

"But you know, dear sir, that sympathy is nothing, if locked within one's own bosom.

"Don't talk to me of sympathy. I am weary of the word. I suppose they call it sympathy when they come here and talk to me with long faces and fine-spun words; and before they have gone fifty yards from the house, I hear them laughing on the other side of the hedge. No, no, child, I know what sorrow is. I have seen a good deal of



it in my time ; and I know it is what few people feel much of, except for themselves. Perhaps I ought hardly to say so either, for I remember how you wept on the day my poor boy was buried, and that could not have been for yourself—for what was he to you ? Ah ! my child, I remember those tears. They were more to me than volumes of fine words.”

It was not always, however, that Kennedy spoke thus to Grace. He was sometimes harsh even to her, for it was his nature to be so ; and those who speak of great afflictions, or even of great events of any kind, wholly changing the tone and bias of natural feeling, know little of that nature of which they speak. There is but one change from which we have a right to anticipate any radical or lasting result, and even that leaves the same tone and bias to be striven against so long as life remains.

Still it was soothing and pleasant to that solitary and friendless man to have the orphan-girl so near him, though, why she came so often, and lingered so long about him, he was wholly at a loss to imagine.

She herself scarcely knew the nature of her own feelings. That she loved him for his own sake, was scarcely to be supposed; and yet she did love him with a strange kind of tenderness, which made her long to call him father; and one day, when they sat together in the sunshine at his door, and his manner was more than usually cordial, she looked up into his face, and ventured to ask him if she might call him father. But a cloud immediately settled upon his features, and he answered in words which poor Grace was never able to forget.

“No, no, child. You are going too far now. That I like you to come here, I will not deny; and that you sometimes while away the long hours, and make my life less weary, I can say with truth; but that any other voice than *his* should call me father, is a thing that cannot be. No, no. When you have known what I have known, you will understand how nature has her broken cords, which it would be a poor mockery to pretend to tie again. No, no. I have been a parent, and I have heard the cherub voice of infancy lisping the name of father. As

time rolled on, I have listened to the same sound, until it swelled into more meaning, and sunk into my soul, filling all its vacant chambers with the melody of love. Yes, morning after morning, I have been aroused from slumber, when the early birds had scarce begun their song, by the fond and playful touch of my own, my only child. And now these things come back to me in my desolate old age, and I cannot—no, I must not let you call me father.”

“Forgive me,” said Grace, with a voice that could scarcely articulate, “forgive me. I am an orphan. I never knew what it was to use the name of father, or of mother.”

“Poor child!” said Kennedy; and he took her hand, and drew her so near him, that she ventured for the first time to lean her head upon his shoulder, and weep.

In the meantime, all was peace and joy in the habitation of Mrs. Falkland. It was frequently observed of the good lady herself, that her youth had returned with all its freshness and vigor; for her cheek now bloomed with health, and her step was light and active, as in by-gone days. It was im-

possible for her son not to notice this change, or to deem it otherwise than cheaply purchased by the sacrifice he had made. Not that he ever estimated very highly the mere personal gratifications he had now given up; the sacrifice was, in the position he had held among a certain class of society, who now looked upon him as a sort of traitor to the pledge of good-fellowship which his previous conduct had implied. Nothing was said to him on the subject, for there was a dignity and determination about George Falkland, which effectually repelled familiarity, whenever it was his wish to do so; but his presence became evidently an intrusion among his former friends, diffusing over every countenance a silent gloom, like that which would naturally be produced by the entrance of a suspected person into a secret council. He was, in short, considered as a sort of spy upon their actions, and such being the general feeling toward him, it became less difficult to withdraw himself entirely from their society.

Still there were some who entertained for George Falkland more than the common

regard of mere acquaintanceship, and who felt a sincere regret to lose from their social circle a companion whose position in society, whose talents, and gentlemanly manners alike combined to render him a valuable acquisition to whatever class he might attach himself.

With these friends it was a real difficulty to Falkland to maintain the ground he had so recently, and, in their opinion, so unreasonably taken.

"Why should you think so much," they used to say, "of that luckless Kennedy? He was a low fellow, after all, and if he was drowned by the rising of the tide, it has only made us all the wiser, by teaching us not to ride home by the beach when we have been out to dine."

To these remarks George Falkland would sometimes reply with a visible shudder; for, as he told his cousin Grace, he never afterward could rise from the dinner-table without realizing again the grasp of that clenched hand, when the last hold of the drowning man was upon him.

There was one family in particular, with

whom George Falkland always found it difficult to adhere strictly to the resolution he had formed ; and on one memorable day, he had just begun to think, that as more than a year had passed since the death of poor Kennedy, he might surely satisfy his friends by remaining with them at least an hour beyond his usual time. He had even filled his glass again, on the strength of this determination, when his better feelings gained the mastery, and he rose suddenly from the table, and wished the party good night.

It was a fine moonlight evening in October, when he rode slowly along his lonely way, too happy to accelerate his speed, in the thought that he had escaped, though narrowly, from breaking his solemn vow. Wrapped in these reflections, and the many thoughts to which they gave rise, he was suddenly startled by the sound of a carriage advancing with unusual rapidity toward him ; and, drawing up his horse to listen, he heard the clatter of horses' hoofs at full gallop. His next impulse was to alight, and it was well that he did so, for in a few seconds the carriage was before him, and it

was only by the steadiness of his eye and hand, that he was enabled to lay hold of the rein of the affrighted animal, and arrest its furious course.

“My father!” cried a feeble voice at that instant, and Falkland then saw for the first time the figure of a female in the carriage, who implored him, with all the strength she retained, to assist her to go back in search of her father. With difficulty, however, could she make herself understood; and such was the agitation under which she labored, that her simple story was long in being told. It was no other than this, that her father having got out of the carriage to adjust the rein, while thus engaged, the horse had suddenly started off, and, as she believed, had dragged the carriage over him; and, with astonishing presence of mind, she had remained perfectly quiet, while the horse was going at its utmost speed. Had Falkland been a few minutes later, a sudden turn in the road, with a steep descent on one side, would probably have terminated her existence; while, had his eye been less steady, or his hand less firm, he might never

have been able to stop the terrified animal, and thus to rescue from an awful death, the gentle being who now leaned upon his arm, and urged him to go faster, and faster still, though her own strength was scarcely able to support her to the spot where she believed her father to be laid.

What, then, was her astonishment, to see his well-known figure hastening toward her, evidently in the possession of his accustomed health and strength. The consequence was a very natural one. Her reason, which had withstood the shock of terror and distress, gave way under that of unexpected joy, and the daughter sank senseless into the arms of her parent.

The following morning found both the strangers welcome visitors beneath the roof of Mrs. Falkland. Miss Cameron, for that was the young lady's name, was sufficiently recovered to know that her father was safe, and by degrees the whole came back to her recollection, and she talked and smiled with the rest of the family, at the providential meeting between her and George Falkland, who did not fail to recall, in his own mind,



the temptation he had been under to remain an hour longer with his friends, by which means he would not only have broken a promise now kept inviolate for more than twelve months, but would have lost the opportunity of saving the precious life of a being, who struck his youthful fancy as the loveliest he had ever beheld.

Mr. and Miss Cameron were well known in the neighborhood, but it so happened that they never had been introduced to the Falklands before. Their meeting now was of a kind to make their acquaintance more intimate than years of common visiting could have rendered it; and the first awakening of kind interest to which an awful and alarming event had given rise, was followed by a frequency of intercourse, in which George Falkland considered himself richly rewarded for the few instances of self-denial, in which his natural inclination had been crossed; but most of all, for that particular instance which had been the means of introducing him to the society of Miss Cameron.

But why prolong a story of love, which all understand, though few know how to

speak of? Suffice it, that not twelve months after this event, the bells of the village church were ringing merrily one fine evening in July, and Mrs. Falkland and her family were all in readiness to welcome home the heir of her house and name, with his beautiful bride, once Miss Cameron, after their marriage tour. And not the inmates of his mother's establishment only, were expected to rejoice, for there were tables spread upon the lawn, and rustic seats made ready, and Grace Dalton was passing from one to another, placing the crowning dish of plenty on the board, and arranging the accommodation of all, even the poorest and the meanest of her neighbors from the village.

At last the sound of carriages was heard. The gates were thrown open, and the happy travellers looked out, and saw what a welcome awaited them. Nor were they too fastidious to despise the rural minstrelsey of that humble place. A band of village musicians struck up a lively air. A troop of children then came hand in hand, after them their parents, followed by the young men

and maidens of the village, and took their places at the tables under the spreading trees, with the green turf for their carpet, and the cloudless skies for their canopy.

Those who argue that there is no social enjoyment without strong stimulus, might have been defeated in their theory that night. Whether it was the want of taste in the inhabitants of that obscure village, or their folly in being so easily contented, we will not pretend to say; but, certainly, there was no lack of harmless mirth, of happy faces, of laughter and good-fellowship, that night.

Perhaps Grace Dalton was the most serious of any in the company; yet she moved from one cheerful group to another, bestowing her kindest attentions upon the poorest and the humblest individuals there, with a sweet satisfaction in her countenance, which spoke the language of hospitality, as eloquently as the most lively joy. She even went so far as to join in the games of the children, just to set them the more at ease; but no sooner did she see them thoroughly emancipated from restraint, than she with-

drew to some quieter group, or stole away to a shady spot among the trees, where she might stand still for a moment, and look on, without being seen.

And now as daylight was departing, and the shadows grew dark beneath the trees, thousands of colored lamps suspended from their branches, burst forth into dazzling light ; while a display of fire-works, of which none of the company had been apprized, threw their splendid stars into the sky.

There was no longer any need for Grace to exercise her ingenuity in entertaining the company, or setting them at ease. She was now liberated from all duties of that description, and, turning into a shady walk, she indulged herself with the luxury of believing she was alone. What then was her surprise, to see the figure of old Kennedy leaning upon his staff !

With the privilege of a child, to which he appeared to consider her entitled, she went and stood still beside him ; for she knew his temperament too well to break upon his silent moods by addressing him abruptly.

"They seem very happy," said the old

man. "I told you that I would not come, for I thought I could not bear it. But as I sat alone in the twilight, it rushed into my mind that I would just come and see how it might have been with *him*—if—if—" and he dashed a tear from his eye, while his words seemed to choke him in the utterance.

"Ay, there they are," said he, after a long pause. "There is the bridal party come out. See how graciously they go from one table to another; and, hark! what is that which George Falkland is telling them?"

They both listened; and as the gay and happy party approached nearer, they could distinctly hear George Falkland bid them all welcome, and receive their good wishes in return.

"I have not treated you with the usual kind of hospitality," said he. "I have given you nothing to excite your mirth, but I hope you have not been the less happy. I cannot for my own part forget, and I am sure you would not wish me to forget to-night, that had I, on one occasion, stayed one hour later at table, or even taken one glass more, I should not only never have known the hap-

piness of calling this lady my wife, but in all human probability she would never have seen the light of another day."

"Yes, child," said Kennedy again, as if the train of his thoughts had scarcely been interrupted, "such might have been *his* situation. And you, Grace Dalton, might have been leaning on his arm like yon happy bride. But what have I said, my child? and why do you weep as you did on the day of the funeral?"

"Because I loved your son."

"You loved him!"

"Yes. And he loved me—at least, he told me so."

"Then come to my bosom," said the old man, opening his arms, "and you shall be my child indeed, and I will be your father. Now, now I understand you. Yes, lean on this withered bosom; there is warmth in it yet. Sweet as an angel's visits have been thine to me; but from this hour let us never part again."

And it was so, that Grace became an inmate in the humble abode of the old man, and dwelt with him until his dying day; and

sweet and salutary was the influence her mild and chastened spirit exerted over him. The arguments of a more powerful reason, his morbid mind would, in all probability, have repelled ; but the persevering solicitude of a meek and quiet spirit, few can resist.

The little property which Kennedy had possessed, he bequeathed to Grace Dalton at his death. When that event took place, she put on mourning as if she had been his child ; and perhaps few parents are followed to the grave with sorrow more sincere, than was hers for her adopted father.

THE END

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